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*Leviathan*

WILLIAM BOLITHO

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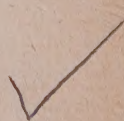
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# LEVIATHAN





# LEVIATHAN

(ENGLAND—FRANCE)

BY WILLIAM BOLITHO

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LEVIATHAN

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By William Bolitho

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TO  
JOHN LLOYD BALDERSTON  
ANIMATOR AND INSPIRER

142995

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## *England's State Ballet*

CHANGING guard at Buckingham Palace is the State Ballet of the English. The French and the proud Russians do not know of this, and boast we have nothing to set against their national ballets. But their dancers are only seen in closed theatres, and before paid seats: they use the oldest of arts for many things and small things. The English set their ballet in public, under the sky, and have only one subject.

The result is so much above other national shows, and so different in setting and step, that we forget its real kinship with the magnificent scenes of Pavlova and Nijinski, or with the school of the great Opera of Paris, and with the long unfolding of these from the naked rhythms which celebrated peace and war, marriage and death in the tribes, by steps ordered by art and emotion.

The English have lost all their own love-dances, and their fandangoes. But every morning, in London, their picked men figure an amazing, slow war-dance of watch and watch over their empire, their island, and their civilisation.

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The enormous scene is the outer court of Buckingham Palace; an oblong of ash-violet asphalt. At the back are the high brown walls of the Palace, pierced by the King's Porch. Dividing it from the space outside is a fence of iron bars, yards high, of iron bars as thick as wrists, studded with emblems of the English cult—crowns, sceptres, symbols of union and order; it half-conceals the ceremonial place within, and half-frames it, like a Greek iconostasis. Set in the middle of these bars, like a cavern in a wood, are the great Gates.

When the King is in London, and they see the gay, unaccustomed Royal Standard over the roof, the crowd collect outside. The spectacle that is preparing is the central mystery of the British Empire; they have come to worship and admire. The soldier actors have divided into two choruses: active and passive; the departing and that which stays; the Old Guard and the New. The Old Guard, with drums rolling and slow, easy march, forms itself left, in a red, steady block. The gates are dragged open. The new Guard, free-stepping, with a smile in its music, blares into sight, through the ten-deep crowd, then into the court. The gates close, the Old Guard are waiting, like men of stone.

Never in any other theatre were costumes such as these. Léon Bakst, in his most sublime



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fever, could not dress dancers like this. For these are professional soldiers, so in the oldest tradition of dancing, half priests in their present function and servants of an Empire. Their tunics, in the London colours, which even the shops and 'buses display, scarlet and brass yellow, intersected with arranged perpendiculars and angles of white pipe-clay, are cunningly devised like the body-masks of primitive devil dancers to take from them the appearance of flesh and blood; they destroy the look of solidity, changing them into two-dimensional figures as if cut out of cardboard.

The mighty bearskin—hairy, heathen, barbarous—turns them into giants, yet with its soft black and the elegance of side cockade they look not rustic nor ill-kempt, but like the Varing bodyguard of Byzance, splendid in their force. Their bandsmen show still more plainly in what luxurious service they are listed: their tunics encrusted an inch thick with jet and silver. In their hands the trumpets and trombones lose the familiar look and seem like monstrous exotic tulips, looted from the garden of another world.

The sky lets through a glint on them, and the eye catches the clean, silvery steel of their bayonets.

Once in place, the great Gates close. All of

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us press closer to see the dance begin. Old Guard and New Guard face one another. Their officers advance, chin pressed to flagstock in a bold and hieratic gesture as if they held some mystery, light but precious. They meet, touch hands to pass the order papers. The Old Guard comes to salute the New. They move in slow march, stiff instepped; they have put aside the joy of their entrance; the trumpets are still, and only the drum and the fifes mark their step; marching like this, not heavily, but with measure between gravity and grace. No giddy Frenchmen or stick-jointed Germans can be dignified when they slow march. With the King's Guards it is as grave and touching as a movement of Beethoven. They are figuring the continuity of that watch and ward over their kings, their possessions, their homes, their island, and their empire which shall go on for ever unbroken. And the crowd understands. . . .

The next capital moment in the parade is still stranger. Two and two, the officers with their faded rich standards sloped, tread up and down in time the long front of the palace; two sentries with rigidly inclined bayonets follow them; then two more officers with drawn swords cross these and repass. The masses of scarlet and brass stand easy, left and right;

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warm gusts of regimental music away still further to the right. These stationary masses of pure colour are a new beauty—the only movement is the flickering to and fro of the couples moving in their ritual task of taking over. The crowd stares, and shifts nervously like gypsies in a church, while this long ceremonial, this motionless mass dancing, lasts in silence.

Then, all having been performed, the sacred trust passed from scarlet soldier to scarlet soldier, the third act is ready. The tall policemen open the Gates, the crowd rushes to new positions. A sudden unimpeded gap of vision opens on to the two Guards. Bandsmen, weighed down by their copper, like savage chieftains, white aproned with skins, pipe-clayed, gorgeous figures line up to the opening in fours. Behind them, the rest turn at the word of command: one short stamp on the ground, more impressive than all the tramlings of Zulu *impis*. The drummers raise their sticks to their mouths, as if to kiss the tips; then the slow march again, out of the gates, more regularly than a river but as strong as a cataract. The Gates close. The sight has passed.

So, in London they celebrate daily with all the pomp of art and tradition, the changing of

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the Guard. The old passes, the new remains; the breach between, instead of dividing, is exalted, and emphasises the unbroken watch. The war dancing of remote times has been transformed and ennobled: there remains in this changing of the Guard the unconquerable will to keep their own, which is the only thing the English know or tolerate in war. It is a beautiful thing of the highest art.

## *England in a Crystal*

**H**ALF an hour before programme time, the King's procession in state to open Parliament for Labour brought thousands of us to the end of the Mall. While we waited for the sight, each cunningly manœuvred with sly pushes to steal a rank nearer, and a better view. Children high up on their fathers' shoulders, fidgetted with excitement. Little girls made little jumps to catch sight of the feather crowns of a group of Palladium Indians, which slanted out of a rank bed of bowler hats on the left. Old women with tightly clutched glazed hand bags, confidentially prophesied to each other that this was the last Royal pageant before Revolution. All the men played with gravity the national make-belief of boredom; none could guess they were truants from office hours, spending feverish, risky minutes.

Each new arrival on our shores of backs, first tiptoed to win a glimpse of the setting of the show: a straight half-mile of deep indigo road, swept and smooth, that faded half way, inch by inch, into luminous mists, which hid the Palace; this framed between stepped perpendiculars that converged in perspective to the same shimmering goal: an unbroken rank of grey overcoats of the Guards that grew smaller



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man by man till they disappeared; above them, the blue leafless trees, the crowded windows of Carlton Terrace, separated by tall Corinthian columns, with fluted waistcoats, like giant footmen; roofs and chimneys, and then the clouds and the winter sun. Set in this immovable frame, at the end of the Mall, shining mistily like a cloudy globe was the starting point, and Buckingham Palace. Like Crystal gazers, the front ranks of us craned and stared steadfastly at this globe of mist. Somewhere far behind, the children will always remember, voices cried out solemnly some unintelligible phrases, which meant "Programme of the Route; one penny." Waiting for a change in the serenely prepared road space, we gently pressed against each other. Sometimes a stronger push like a wave, with a mysterious origin far away in the crowd, drove our elbows into our neighbours and tilted our hats. Then we muttered an apologetic protest.

Figures wavered into sight on the route; moved for a little while and disappeared. A man in a cocked hat on a huge sidling horse edged near a policeman in our view and bent down to whisper. A row of medals glinted on his breast like a bar of fabulous diamonds. Then he wheeled round, and trotted towards the palace, gradually disappearing in the lumi-

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nous mist, until only a smudge of scarlet was left of him. Till he was swallowed up, the sound of his horses' feet came back to us. Other queer uniforms, brocades, men with antique weapons, maces, swords, halberds came into sight, hovered for a moment on their undiscoverable businesses, then were absorbed by the grey walls of the route. London looked at them all, interested, unsurprised, in the way she has. Old things are not amusing or strange to her; she has no self-consciousness about the survivals and costumes with which she transacts her very modern business; these are not picturesque stage playings such as other nations use, but her every day life. For London is stuck in the past, which laps her citizens round under the evanescent furnishings of modernity; gas, electricity, petrol machines: that dateless past after Tudor times, when the beefeaters, postillions, Life Guards, bewigged justices dared their last innovation in dress, and were forced by some mysterious command to stay as they were for ever. The whole machinery of state, a part of which in function we are waiting to see, belongs to that past, which in England is more important and respected than any mere transient present; which endures fossilised and eternal, through every change. The Great Fire did not touch these

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slow and complicated processions; the Great War did not affect in a button the fulldress uniform of these Guards. The native Londoner, watching one of his innumerable street ceremonials, would scarcely blink if Wat Tyler, or some other king-hating worthy of the past, in the dress he wore in life, were suddenly to reappear, fling himself upon the Royal postillions, and die under the ancient weapons of His Majesty's Gentlemen of the Guard. Yet there is something hallucinatory in all this survival; heightened by the deceptive, white mist that blurs all objects a hundred yards away; even the trees seemed to belong to a mirage. The long-coated, bear-skinned lines of soldiers, that never moved or coughed, the officers fixed in attitudes of cardboard grace, seemed unreal, and all my neighbours spellbound. I assured myself that this was a modern, world's greatest city, on the eve of a daring experiment in government, which this very scene was to inaugurate and begin. But my imagination refused to be convinced. While it hesitated, the thick mists at the end of the Mall, rounded by some trick of the air currents, and set on the coloured road: like a sphere on a pedestal: like a clairvoyant's crystal, began to live. Specks of dazzling brilliance glowed inside it; it was coloured like an opal. The procession had started from the

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Palace. Sparks grew into the breastplates of scarlet-crested Life Guards, with drawn swords, on glossy horses. The past, real, living, issued slowly from the heart of the crystal, brand new; convincing. The Prince's coach passed with only a white glove visible inside it. Then rolling and lumbering into sight, drawn by eight horses with red silk braid in their manes, the history and symbol of England, of the British Empire, the State Coach of the King. Outriders in cloth of gold, and velvet peaked caps, with their hair powdered, like fresh coloured old men; beefeaters in flat Elizabethan caps; officers of the court in scarlet and gold, with feathers and cockades, accompanied it, in an ordered reverent crowd. So might the Sleeping Beauty come to visit the world after her trance, with all her servants' dresses as new as they were made, with untarnished magnificence, but in the cut and fashion of the past. The coach itself; gilt and huge, four great boughs of gold, knotted in a floral boss in the centre. The side and the front were unbroken sheets of shining glass, that winked with every step. Behind, as priceless jewels are displayed in a Bond Street jeweler's shop, on scarlet silk cushions like a throne, the King and Queen: she in ermine, coronetted, entirely self-possessed, he a little keen-eyed grey admiral, bowing and at

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ease, twin incarnations of that Past with which England continually lives. The crowd cheer as they did in the days of Elizabeth, the sharp barking of the officers, and the bayonets at the present in unison, accompany them as they pass, all along the route, on their way to Westminster. Ahead of them are the triumphant Socialists: Ramsay Macdonald back from exile, levelers of the Clyde, agitators of the coal mines. The State Coach rolls to meet them, burnished and unchanging, as it met Walpole, Palmerston, Gladstone. In Westminster a new epoch has begun, dangerous, incalculable, different. The Past comes to meet it and greet it, impassive, unhurrying: in the old way.



## *Election Fog*

ENGLAND for a fortnight made up her mind about Protection, and one day, male and female, crossed ballot papers. The first results of this collective willing were due at ten o'clock the same evening. The best place to learn them, by agreement of the press trusts, the wireless, and tradition, was undoubtedly Trafalgar Square. City life everywhere means free amusements: Election night is one of the best to be had in London.

So within the time of an underground tube journey after supper, the first citizens took up their stand in the choicest corners of Nelson's plinth, in the great square facing Whitehall and the electric bulletins. They brought their children and wives (for London mobs are rarely dangerous) and passed the time in neck stretchings; watching each other, as all crowds do, waiting for the others to start the fun. Even in times when the nation decides whether to take or leave Baldwin's counsel of despair, there must be farce in an English general election. Perhaps Dickens and Pickwick are to blame. They seem to be for most national idiosyncrasies here.

As the minutes pass, boys appear with false noses and sooted cheeks. Politicians are

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cheered by their Christian names. The East End batch, who come a little late, know what is expected of them, and dance in the road, and change hats. But soon the crowd-gaps fill up, the traffic stops; there is no more room for fooling. There has never been so uncertain a fight as this election; perhaps never one on which so much depended for England, and so obviously. So now the wait has calmed, there is anxiety in the air, and doubt and eager expectation.

Something else, too, all of a sudden. The fringes of the crowd turn their heads, which before were all facing one way; sniff, and tell each other: "Fog." It is unmistakable, and moving up quickly, from the old river, behind Whitehall, eastward down Pall Mall, southward along the Charing Cross Road. First comes the smell of coal dust and gas; then yellow gray patches, the size and color of an old man's hands, wash into the crowd, pickets of the dense waves behind. It moves quicker than water, and by the time the centre has sniffed and turned to look, the outlines of the crowd have disappeared and we are walled in blank, unpierceable mist.

Londoners are used to this unearthly visitation and have indeed some mournful pride in it. It is inexplicable and a little scaring to the

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foreigners who see it for the first time: this pest that grows along the river, among the roots of bridges, and in holes under ancient black miles of wharfing, beastly, evil smelling, more opaque than night, chilly and immense. You see it, almost touch it, as it passes on its way like a moving wall, blotting out the arc lamps, hiding the buildings, separating friend from friend, though they are standing together. The prudent grip one another's hands and push toward the mouth of the underground railway, while they can still see their way and cut their night short, for safety's sake.

The fog has damped all the various sounds of this fretful mob. The cries and laughter come strangely across as if from under a thick blanket, or from a distance. The buildings in front of our eyes vanish, all except their lighted windows, which glow separately as if we were facing a mountain slope crowded with cottages. Then these, too, are buried in the moving fog, leaving it faintly luminous. The fog has won. We stand now helpless to move, waiting for a redeeming puff of wind to show us the way out; at the bottom of an ocean of smoke.

It is ten o'clock. Scarcely ten minutes, for this brutal change, from a living human crowd in the heart of a great city, to this awe-inspiring solitude, in a cloud of silence and mystery.

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The first results begin to come through. We had forgotten about them. High up, as if written across the Zodiac, with no connection with the earth, the electric ribbon spells brokenly a name, blurred figures, then *Liberal Gain*. There is a far-off cry of unseen cheerers; and the swift writing disappears. Boys throw crackers. Something is happening in the void ten yards off. The sky sign ripples past again, with its message, and the noise swells. And imperceptibly, unreasonably, the fog lifts and I see my fellows again.

We are sadly thinned out. The roads are almost clear. The packed masses are cleaved and shaken, and there are free spaces. Even under the column, now too far off from the news to be a desirable advantage point, there are gaps in the watchers. The ragged dancing begins again. A cornet starts the flaunting "Banana" tune. Barrows, on which are propped glowing cressets of coke, of the baked chestnut peddlers, have appeared in battalions, with light skirmishers of chocolate hawkers, and the first evening special editions. There is room to walk about. But before another five minutes have passed the fog is back again, stifling, sinister. The street lamps vanish as if snuffed with a sheet. The police are rigging up flares, and they crackle and hiss as they meet the foul

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air in little, fierce fans of light along the middle of the road. The smell gets into the throat. Rare taxis hoot their way feebly westward. Their headlights glimmer a few feet ahead, as if they, too, were red, sore eyes.

So it goes on, as if the fog were engaged like our parties in a hidden and obscure struggle with the invisible wind. Each lift of this envelopment shows momentarily, almost surprisingly, that the crowd is not gone. Each shows some queer sight: a couple kissing rapturously; a vast, sulky bronze lion, watching over Nelson; a man with a white-paper hat, munching fruit, seated on the damp curb. Through the fog the loud speaker begins to proclaim the results; a giant mouthing voice, coming from nowhere, as if the huge fog itself were raving.

The electric sign fades and passes far overhead. Once there was a scuffle near me, and a string of running police and tattered boys rushed past and vanished. And the great election process goes on, the deep mystery of a people's vote, which no one can forecast, though all have a share in it, the moulding of the destinies of this Empire; steps in the dark, in the fog of world destiny, which is worse than the dark. A nation is picking its way to-night to the future, groping. . . .



## *The Pilgrims and the Sea*

A PILGRIMS' Dinner is out of place for bad news: its seven courses and four good wines, the soft liqueurs, the excellent cigars are preparation for mutual compliment, not for writings on the wall. It is the choice occasion for after-dinner speech, such as well-dined bankers use; the last audience for homely untruths about "our Transatlantic cousins," and comforting, anecdotic replies. Here prominent editors from the Middle West have their dislike for British ways drowned in a champagne-cup; here English Princes address the English-speaking world, and remind it of Shakespeare and the Abbey, to thunderous applause. It is the temple feast of Anglo-Saxon diplomacy: good humoured, useful, innocent, where the flowers of our common speech grow before every plate in peace.

Yet even to this dinner, where never anything worse than a platitude was uttered, the rough realities forced their way. The *Leviathan* was docked at Southampton; the English companies had agreed to leave her stokers alone. To celebrate these two events the Toastmaster was booked by telephone; a menu framed; the passengers invited. And at the point of eight, the cloak-room was glutted with

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opera hats, and a torrent of thirsty Pilgrims choked the stairs and the approaches to the bar. Everyone was cheerful; black silk waistcoats and "tuxedos" mingled as amicably as ever with tail-coats and miniature medals; and horn-rimmed spectacles peered benevolently into gold pince-nez. By the consent of all, the *Leviathan* was reckoned as an ordinary boat, and details of the deck games, not of the engine-room run, were sought and given.

So when the Toastmaster, in his scarlet hunting coat, with that voice that has converted more to old tradition than any speech, belowed: "Pray silence, milords and gentlemen," we drank the toast of King and President with old-time zeal. The Chairman was Lord Desborough; he spoke *extempore*. To this fatal imprudence I attribute what followed. Old hands will do it: light their pipes in mines, strike matches in ships' magazines, and let their long experience lull them. Lord Desborough had breathed that air so long, that he has forgot its peril. He has heard "Hands across the Sea" so often, that he let himself slip for once into the belief that it had come to pass, and that the great object was already accomplished, and that the Sister nations' destinies can never clash; he forgot the *Leviathan*; and made his chairman's speech without notes.

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Even so it was a very small match; an amiable, well-meant match, struck in calm air, with not a single notice-board in sight. He had discovered that, by a remarkable coincidence, a touching coincidence which showed the extraordinarily close relations between the two nations, his right-hand neighbour, guest of honour, was born on the Warwickshire estates of the Desboroughs, and went to the village school. No wonder he was the only Judge of the Supreme Court that stood out against the strict application of the Volstead Amendment. "Pray silence, milords and gentlemen, please, for his Honour, Justice Sutherland, of the United States Supreme Court," shouted warmly, benevolently, the Toastmaster, as pleasantly interested as anyone.

The Judge finds that a small beard hides injudicious emotion as well as any wig. Without a blink he pronounced judgment for the British Common Law, the Mother of Constitutions, in the exact terms that he had intended. Only when he had quite finished did he look round the journalists and refer to the turkey that Lord Desborough has just presented him with in open court. He did it charmingly, mildly; without losing his head, refused the compromising bird. There are no hyphenated Englishmen in America, he was proud to

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declare, there was no divided allegiance. Why did he not sit down, then, under those cheers? *Extempore* speaking is a contagious pest, like the St. Vitus dance. Even Judges are not immune. Justice Sutherland went on to speak of the great effort America was making on the seas, of which that noble boat, the *Leviathan*, was the proud forerunner. It was done. The subject that never, never must be spoken of had leapt up, invested with all the uncontrollable momentums of free, *extempore*, after-dinner oratory. The Red Toastmaster coughed. He is a man of wide experience. Every Englishman assumed the stony smile, which foreign talk of sea rivalry always produces. Germans have seen that smile; but it was before the war. Frenchmen, lightly jesting about submarines at Washington, have been favoured with a glimpse of the same phenomenon. Talk to a banker of the lovableness of Lenin; open a conversation with a Spaniard on his wife; invite an Italian to explain to you the whole truth about Caporetto; but leave an Englishman's sea alone when you are with him. A quiver ran round the long tables, and automatically, as if moved with a spontaneous curiosity, every Englishman took up the menu and began to read it earnestly. And every American who was to speak, moved by the in-

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toxication of doing something wrong, pushed his hand into his coat pocket and tore up his notes.

Pray silence, milords and gentlemen, for the Right Honourable the President of the Board of Trade. The youngest member of the Cabinet felt like the leader of a rescue party, when the first sniff of fire-damp comes to his nostrils at the head of the pit shaft. All depended on him; he put his trust in length. He has a good head for figures; his memory is stuffed with anecdote; his speech was well-prepared. For double his allotted time, he stood bravely in the gap; covering the forbidden subject; burying it with words, trying to distract attention, as babies are comforted, by talking earnestly of other things. Cold, not fatigue, conquered him at last; the extreme and freezing ice of those absent-minded smiles, that stuck unmelted on those red, honest faces with the persistence of plaster. Pray silence, milords and gentlemen, please, for an honourable Senator.

The next speaker was a man of the world, Senator Nicholas Longworth. He felt that this matter should be cleared up; and that candid, open explanation in a friendly spirit by himself was the only way to do it. He knew the English country-gentleman; they were both



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sportsmen and could understand each other. Alas, he appealed to everyone to look at this sea-rivalry in a sporting spirit. America was going to try to whip you; to build the biggest, best merchant-service in the world; she only asked for a fair field and no favour. Did not all those English hearts love a good fight? So, with jocularly, which showed up the loneliness of that air, he stumbled on, tripping at every step, yet ever venturing more to make up for each tumble, and ending with "This is a question of sport, and there does not exist an American, nor an Englishman, whom the prospect does not overjoy."

Oh, very, muttered the Toastmaster. Pray silence, milords and gentlemen, please, for Senator Reed Smoot. The moment had now arrived, and the man with it. He enjoyed it, and kept a little silence before he began; while the English learnt from their neighbours that this was a Senator from the fastness of the Mormons; an orator, a Westerner, Simon-pure. "We have heard a lot to-night of the part English blood plays in the making of our great America. We admit it, we are proud of it. But the day has gone past when New England counts over the water. Look at so and so. Middle West. And another from

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Colorado. And I myself come from the great and mighty Rocky Mountains."

Then the Senator explained. He has a curious eloquence, heightened by strange exotic appeals to the Lord, which have something of the English Puritan in them, but sound like the calling of a Moslem mullah on his Allah. As he warmed to his story, his straight mouth opened and shut like a steel clutch. His words were English; even his phrases might have been used by a village preacher in Essex. But his accent, harsh, with nothing of the grave rusticity of the Judge, or the lazy comfortable drawl of the millionaire, was fresh to English ears; excellently fitted for the businesslike apocalypse he was reciting to them.

No need for him to tell, but he did, that he had no drop of British blood in his veins, and yet had no other tongue; this was no sub-variety of Elizabethan, but as foreign as Russian, that yet by a pure chance we can understand. He kept back nothing of what his huge race were thinking, what they meant by the *Leviathan*. Closing the eyes, one imagined that he was angry, this hard trap-jawed man; but the calmness of his face showed that he was simply explaining. That his country were looking to the sea; that they meant to have a fair share of world trade. We have no traditions to live

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down to; we will organise the trade of sailor as we have done that of automobile factories. Gone the days of little pay and hazing. The sea is an economical proposition. Heresy after heresy, audacities piled on each other to build up an immense, hideous truth. America was serious about the sea; the *Leviathan* was no panflash, no daring political job which would be forgotten, as we had comforted ourselves, but the first step in a serious, thought-out campaign to have the biggest merchant fleet in the world. Germany's place; perhaps even more. Worse still, she might do it; with those unheard-of ideas of making seamen workmen, not underpaid adepts at a semi-sacred calling. If so, the whole basis of shipping would be blown up, transformed; every branch of the oldest occupation of the English utterly transformed. A horrifying thought. Looking at the Mormon Senator it almost looked as if he and his friends might succeed; uncultured, unhandicapped men. Supposing——

Pray silence, milords and gentlemen, please, for the Chairman. He had sat through these avalanches which his first careless foot had stirred, with admirable composure. A little more colour in his face; a certain obstinacy in keeping his eyes to the table cloth. Well, gentlemen, we have listened to some plain

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speaking to-night. I suppose that is always to the good. The exact note; a different strength to that of the Mormon; just as impressive. The one a rough, biting wind; the other a tree, an oak, built for storms. We had looked for a moment into the future, the hundred years to come; where new worlds are making; at the price of the huge struggles of empires and ideas. And in the midst of it, gripped in a passionless lockhold: these two, the noble Lord Chairman, broad-shouldered, quiet, immovable; the thin, fierce resistless senator; the eternal flux and reflux; the old and the new.

## *Epinard Loses*

NEWMARKET starts with a wall of yellow slabs of fried plaice, built up along barrows outside the station. Over this, hawkers look inquisitively as we pass, indifferent to sales. They are outlying pickets of local curiosity, which lies in wait for us all the way. Every hedge has a round fruit, a meditative watching head, on the way to the town. Newmarket lies at the bottom of the spectrum. Its houses are bright orange brick; spattered with pink creeper; and a canary-yellow road runs through it to the Heath. There are crowds on the pavements and crooked terraces; all watching, all ruminating our strangeness: most of us are Frenchmen on their way to see Epinard win and bankrupt the English bookies. Every sedate window in the cottages where the head-lads live, is a spy post, and the older houses push out of the ranks on to the road, as if they had crept up in the night to get a better view. There is a million of French money on the big race, and every bookmaker in England will have to pay it back four or five to one if the French horse wins. Thousands of the *Maisons Laffitte* people have come to follow their money, and collect. Most of them have come straight from

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Victoria Station, and this Newmarket is their first glimpse of England. The town wanders out to the edge of the Heath, in the laundered English air, that is full of hazy sentimental light this morning, as if it were stretched under a transparent ceiling of mother of pearl. Then comes a huge, wavy lawn, weedless and level, that dips into tender mists, through which trees of grey spun glass show their tops delicately. Few of the foreigners are calm enough to notice these sights; their minds are set on spending beforehand their magnificent gains: the *bombe* at the Metropole to-night. English bookmakers and racing men walk with us, untalkative; they keep looking at the Frenchmen with long, slow glances, as if they were guessing the weight of prize cheeses at a fair. We all take the cut across the grass to avoid the motor traffic; and as we get nearer the track, the treasure horses pass through us, coated and muffled, in woollen coroneted coats, better cut than our own, on their way to the course. Then the Pavilions hoist in sight, standing with open jaws, and waiting close together to receive us. We arrive at a glistening lake of motor cars before the entrance.

This is a twenty-shilling crowd, and the enclosures are closer packed than the free standing room near the post. There is hardly room



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to make a bet. Tattersalls are strung out in a veteran line, fat and voluble, between the stone steps and the track. Each has a medal of brass as big as a butter dish. They study their positions on books as large as easels, and grumble when the weak, half-fainting sun eludes the clouds and falls on their necks. When Englishmen are nervous, they hate the weather. It is so pressed round them, that it looks from the stand like a great seine of fish, just pulled out of the water, with gleams like scales on spectacles and polished binocular straps; heaving and squirming. Here and there a hand, clutching a paper, protrudes, like a tail, semaphoring signals to the tick-tack men away on my right. By one of my elbows a grey square Manchester man explains why he backs Dumas, in a stagey northern whisper. On the other, two Frenchmen manufacture mysteries about their wagers on Epinard. The foreigners sit all together and feel at home; and if one of them is pressed out of his station, he feels nervous till he has squeezed back. Every one of them is a heavy plunger; who stands to win his idea of a fortune or to lose all. The unaccustomed air, and the weight of the occasion oppresses them, and their jabber droops. The stolid bookmakers, the deceptive length of the course in this filmy air, frighten them. The ring barks up at us unin-

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telligibly, and we echo back, in shuffling whispers. It is hard to wait these last ten minutes. By some effect of the rays through the glass-roof over us, the turf in front, gold with a thin coat of green on it, appears a shallow and rapid river, rushing over the emerald moss. There is only one mood among the English: this is business, life or death. "Epinard can't give Dumas three stone," says the Manchester man to his wife. "They ought to have put thirteen stone on his French back," says this thin, prosperous wife, extravagantly, frowning at the row of uneasy, red French necks beneath her.

Two-forty; the runners for the Cambridge-shire are led round the paddock. The owners are in the middle; harsh-mouthed women; festive old gentlemen, grey hatted. They talk to the jockeys: proud sullen little men, with boys' bodies, tapping on their soft black topboots, woman's size, with polished whips. These wear lustrous rich silk shirts in carnival colours, and each of them has cocked his cap at a chosen angle. Round them walk the string of the world's best horses, mincingly, with exquisite shaped hoofs and legs, like schoolgirls going to a party, with their manes done up in little plaits, and close elastic stockings. No animal has so human a look as a race horse; it is the look of a pampered, excitable child. We jostle away

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to get back to the pavilion before the jockeys mount.

When we reach the third stair, the horses lope past below, on their way to the start, a mile and a furlong away. Pharos, Verdict, Dumas, with parti-coloured little men, half kneeling on their backs; black, white cap; green, pink stripes; brown and blue: naïve essays in colour matchings. They pass, with irking bits. Then there is Epinard at last. He is a bay, with a blue and white mannikin, numbered 1, because he is top weight. The bookmakers stop shouting to turn and gaze; the Frenchmen and some women cheer raggedly.

Something is happening to the bookmakers. There is a sudden scurry round them. Until now they were solid, shouting, "Epinard, four to one," like Englishmen who do not care. But now the last-minute wagers come in they drop their voices, a dumb uneasiness creeps over them. Some begin to bellow, "Epinard, three and a half; Epinard, three." A great wad of money, the last French money, has come on. It must have been half a million to change tune like that. These are not catch-money touts, but the solidest bookmakers in England, on the hardest-bitten course; men to take thousands without a blink. All France must have dipped into its stockings to back Epinard to-day. If

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he wins, there will be another Armistice Night in Paris.

I stare into the distance trying to pass the haze, and see more of the start than a set of minute scribblings on the mist. It looks like even writing in a womanly hand, in brown ink, and the upstrokes are unsteady. We stare at it, to read its character for the last time, of sentence or reward. Between us and the hieroglyphics there is a tuft of unshaven saplings. That is the "Bushes" where the heavily weighted break their hearts. If Epinard passes that tuft still heading, he brings fortune. In front of it there is a long incline and the grass is wet.

*They're off.* The writing a mile away changes subtly. The letters float and separate, as if the long sentence were breaking up. Then we see the letters are tiny horses, ridden by coloured insects. Every thousandth second they explain themselves more. The Manchester man lifts his glasses in front of my face, and by the time I have ducked to look under his elbow they have charged into view. A brown horse is in front; blue, white stripes. Before I can remember it, the French yell, *Epinard gagne*. He is leading at the Bushes, a squadron leader's distance in front. They follow him together like a pack near the end of a fox. The nearer

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they come, the faster they gallop; till they go past, the swiftest thing in the world save man, with racing hoofs, their jockeys, like the man-faced locusts of Revelation, half-kneeling, half-lying on their necks, whiphand jerking up and down, like a sting, a coloured pageant of speed. Epinard has vanished. We shout the first syllable of Dumas; before the word is out of our throats, there is a galloping flash and scramble under our eyes; two silk shirts, one white and blue outside, one brown, clattering against the rails, and we yell Epinard again, fiercely. He had crossed to the rails when he disappeared.

But he has lost, by a neck. The tall frame shows the remorseless numbers: Verdict, Epinard, Dumas. There is the pause that follows, in which many things happen in the quiet; predestined things that alter lives. The French are speechless, ruined. The bookmakers eye them in victory, coldly, with the suspicion of a smile. That flash has wiped out many hopes, prepared, perhaps many crimes, but it is spent in silence and shuffling. A moment before we were rich, and were full of plans. Now the instinct is to get out of sight. The pavilion oozes downwards, and the porch out is crammed. Gone the good dinners, prepared to-night, and the admiring friends to-morrow. One by one the losers wake up and collect their wraps and

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the glasses; the greatest race is over that ever was on Newmarket. The stream of Epinard's friends, in silence, begin the homeward journey over the Heath. Behind their backs a cloud bars the top of the rim of the sun which glows under it like a rosy cup, a remote and deceiving sangreal; and other clouds catch its reflected light and gleam in the tranquil sky, like handfuls of most precious and metallic gold, far out of reach of our hands for ever. In front, where the way of the station lies, the scattered battalions of losers trudge over the grass: an army of backs, bowed on the last slope; till line after line, they disappear, first by the feet, then with their heads only visible, like leaves they are slowly blown eastwards over the vague horizon. Each goes to his life, to do with it, now Epinard has lost, as he best imagines.



## *The Wheel in the Lane*

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CHANCE, the mad goddess, has her lodgings in a mean lane off Fleet Street. Here she keeps open court for her faithful. They wait in the slush for the spin of her wheel and the results of the Two-thirty. They are everything, and poor: they are beggars, thieves; clerks and out-of-work; waitresses and charwomen; and truant barmaids, stolen out hatless in their masters' time. They rank up along the gutters, leaving no room for the most savage of lorries to pass, until they have finished their business. This lane slips lamentably back broken, to the river; and at its end there are extravagant outlines of masts amongst shore chimneys, and the rigging of schooners pencilled against the London mists. All its cobbles are half buried in a pudding of mud. Mud-spattered printing works shove the crowd into the bad weather, with sharp brick elbows and encroachments on the sidewalk. There we paddle in filth, and dark puddles speckled with petrol like peacock feathers from a royal train. Magpie Lane: a crazy court for a ruling goddess, where everything is fantastical. Vast scrolls of paper on scarlet trucks await their disproportionate purposes for her decrees and the racing specials; creaking advertisements in

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police blue swing slowly on their hinges, like warnings, not invitations; and to warn her seedy courtiers to beware, a maniac floor crane dangles its tackle over our heads, like handcuffs on a gibbet. Even the arches over the blind warehouse windows are flat: English prison arches crushed out of curve by the weight of black bricks above them.

Round the entrance to this alley, where the newsboys will come running, we pack thickest; there they have fixed up a loafer-guard of spiked iron, curved like an alligator's jaw bone, to keep us from leaning. Peering round the corner, we can see the booth where the foreman passes the papers, and the little ragged parliament of newsboys that wait. Without orders we press back to give them a chance later on, for they are acolytes of our goddess and dispensers of her fate. Rain drabbles us. Gutters drip sooty gouts on to our shoulders, and a thin vapour of steam goes out of our lips up the cold air. We are thinking of other things.

For this is a happy moment in the antechamber of our goddess. We have time to run over our favourite mythology and practice our cult together: Tranquil, You You, and Epinard; Papyrus, Pussy Willow, Parth, and good old Mumtaz Mahal. Old worshippers in this place

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mumble antique names of forsaken shrines, to back their parallels: Flying Fox, Pretty Polly, the Tetrarch, and all the idols of this outlandish religion of racing; mighty beast-gods, whose form is inscrutable and very potent. Not a part of this learned mythology is unknown to the devout here waiting; for we are the pick of the sporting crowd—the punters who never see a race. Our love needs no material sight of wonders. We see by faith, and worship with bandaged eyes. Renowned festivals are loudly discussed: Gatwick and the Cesarewitch, and Doncaster in York, that Tranquil won. In this calendar of our idolatry, more intricate than the Rigveda, no one may stumble and pass it off. If a dodderer, mixed in his names, trips over the Derby winner three years back, a hundred roar to correct him, with ridicule and scandal. Old prophecies are now satisfactorily explained away; new ones whispered straight from the stables. The worth of rival tipsters, addresses of shop bookmakers and their odds, are handed on, and the latest gossip of the ring.

And with all this theology, more occult sciences, mystical arithmetic, and those hard calculations by which the chances of the incalculable may be reckoned, are thoroughly debated: strong secrets of figures, and means

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of squaring the circle both ways. These abstruse matters keep us warm. But when they fail we shuffle our feet and wriggle toes inside our boots, for the service of our goddess is hard, and few have a coat; not many, solid soles. She ruins and rewards. She pays the adept with frowns, and only fools, they say, with favours. But we get more than money; better than food, warmer than drink: she gives us endless hope. She sends blood through old veins and stupefies despair. She is the goddess of To-morrow that wipes out To-day, however mean, flavourless and ill; bewitching cup-bringer that fills life with her wine.

In these inner courts of her temple in Magpie Lane her cup is shared out now. No one remembers any more his misery, however vile; now we attend her favours. Nothing worldly can be compared with these last three minutes of sweet doubt. Discussion fails and even heretical women cease their tattle of omens and old beggars of certainties that their rags disprove. It is the moment when the delicious consolations of last night's bets must disappear, either into the ecstatic joy of a win at last or into the complete hope of one next time. We crane and shiver. The crazy goddess is at hand.

A scuffle of newsboys before the booth. The

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shutter is flung up. A bale of brand-new papers is snatched out. The first of them is running towards us with his armful, and victory in his heels; panting before they start, at a gallop rush the rest. And as they come they divide the newspapers amongst our eager hands, that twitch at them. We turn our prizes inside out to seize our luck.

Now in the rustling of our papers, and louder than they are, we hear the wheel. Look; it is turning up the lane. Higher than a man and scarcely out of reach, it slowly revolves. It is a golden wheel, glinting with tinsel and decked with all the toys that men desire. She spins it at her feet, the Goddess crazed and blind, who rules the end and the beginning—Luck, Fortune, Fate. It lights up the grimy lane between the walls and dazzles our eyes with its magnificence. Turn, glittering wheel, spangled with presents, you tinkling glory. There is a packet for each, hung high on the spokes, if we can only reach. Mugs of hot cocoa and cosy blankets to-night for the six-penny crowd; tankards of ale and carousals for lucky half-crowns. Love for those who want it; release from debts; travelling and houses and good times come back. Turn, wheel, and bring escape, our quittance so long besought; and change us all. High up, like packages in

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a Christmas game, doubles and trebles for tired girls and worn-out women: Monte Cristo millions, forty thousand to one; steam yachts and castles and all the silk delights of leisure and ease. Far off—real, we dreamed of them last night, and a horse's name to bring them.

So the wheel passes, rustling and glowing, over our outstretched finger tips; heavy enough with hopes and griefs to crush us as it rolls. It vanishes up the lane with the shouting news-boys, into the streets and through the town. Juggernaut or chariot of joy? To millions its daily passing is the only beauty.

"Give me a read," mumbles a wreck at my sleeve. "I've got a bit on, and not a penny for the news." He has not seen her pass.



## *The Gypsies' Sea Mary*

**A** LONG with the hiding place of Attila's treasure, the affinities of the Basque language, the Stone Age Empire, and the rest of an odd dozen lost secrets of Europe, there is the antique mystery of the Three Holy Maries.

It is hidden in the tiny Parish Church of Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, at the bottom of Camargue, south of Arles, in a bend of the Gulf of Lyons. Every year, since they counted time in Camargue, the Erraté Gypsies come to look at their secret. On the twenty-third day of May, as we reckon it, they arrive, in their families, clans, and tribes; with their homes, their wives, their children, and their vermin; their horses for sale and horses to keep; their basket-ware, their cook-pots and the whole baggage of their lives—thousands thick, and block the dunes with their camps. The first night, they sing and tell tales, make the wide-open eyes of the local people sting with their smoke. Next day they do their business with Mary-Sarah. The third, they are gone in dust back to the roads and remote woods they call their homes.

These are tight-lipped folk. The "business of Egypt" was never yet blabbed. They have kept the secret of this pilgrimage so long from

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others that they have themselves clean forgotten its meaning. Only the ritual remains and the unbroken tradition of the journey to Camargue. But, as long as the brown Church stands high and dry, like the hull of a wreck, the Gitanos will keep this rendezvous. Not all Gypsies know the custom. Only the Erraté, the men of the blood, know the obligation and the rite. They are the straight-haired gypsies, black and lank, who speak crabbed Calo and sell horses and baskets and know sorcery and pig poisoning. The Zingari, those of the frizzled heads; men of the fair and the suburbs, who sometimes call themselves Caraques, and whom the French call Bohemians, are aliens, who know nothing of Sea Mary, or of the adventure.

But the Erraté, called Gitanos, are as devout on this matter, whether they drive from the French plains or Swiss uplands or from remote Spain or Italy, as Mussulmans on the pilgrimage to Mecca. Outliers of Andalusia, of the heel of Italy, start early each year. By May, they share fires and stories with their cousins of Languedoc, Guyenne, or the foothills of the Pyrenees. The Horde moves together, to be at Saintes Maries up to time. The villagers on the way, knowing their hen-roosts are under truce, come down to see the

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wandering army as it passes. Spanish wag-gons, old and bare-ribbed, as if framed out of Don Quixote's bones, drawn by asses as big as dogs; gay box-caravans from the Touraine; mule-shays from Calabria, creak and rumble over the stifling roads of all Provence south-wards. At night the Gitanos squat in clearings, near fountains, amazing the yokels with their twenty-tongued curses, their whining, endless ballads, and their lively guitars, until on Sea Mary's Eve, they come to the dunes under the church and stock themselves, wheel to wheel, one beside the other, for acres.

As soon as it is light, they go into the church. It is very old and poor. The altar is decked in tinsel and escutcheoned candles, country fashion. Between the benches of wrinkled sea-plank, the aisle creeps into the crypt under the sanctuary. Hundreds of Gitano candles are lit on the arch. The Erraté men and women go down in file to look at their saint. This crypt beyond all doubt was once a temple of Mithras. The ringed seats of the Four Orders have been taken away, and at the end is the stone altar.

Over this altar, worn, half-rubbed out, are the Three Sea Marys in stone. They figure, according to Church legend, three servants of the great Mary: Mary-Jacoba, Mary-Salome,

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and Mary-Sarah. The two first of them were put to sea in an open boat by wicked Jews, once upon a time, with Lazarus, the Resurrected, and Trophimus. A favourable wind and the help of the angels cast them ashore at the foot of the crag (called by the strange name of Ratis) where now stands this church.

No one knows why Mary-Sarah, that was from Asia, is here carved, for she was not of this forlorn crew. She has never been canonised, the legends have nothing to say of her, that I know, except only her existence. But the Gypsies have come for her alone. It is a cutting of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. The three holy servants stand together on a narrow slab, censers or pine-cones in their hands, bending softly in unison to the left, as if listening. Two of the faces are gone. Sarah's alone remains. It is strained and sad; the forehead is wrinkled as if she were trying to hear or remember something too faint to be caught. Underneath their feet are Resurrected Lazarus and Trophimus, seated, wrapped in their togas, silent and attentive; as if they, too, wished to hear the secret that the three had forgotten.

The Gitanos chew their tobacco, shift their feet, shuffle, and stare through the glittering candlelight: many of them are not Christians

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baptised, and the rest have not much habit of churches. Then, when they have had their fill of the sight, they turn back up the steps and return to their camps. That night, when the sun is getting low over the sea, the thousands complete their ritual. They pack themselves on the cliffs, there squatting or standing—motionless, or with the single gesture of hand outstretched over the Mediterranean, they watch the sun set, staying until the last colour has gone. Before dawn they are gone from Camargue.

The strange swarming of this people, as unexpected and unfathomable as the sudden appearance reported by Fabre of myriads of wasps on an arid frozen peak of the Alps, has naturally piqued the curiosity of the anthropologists. They have not learned a great deal: the Gitanos themselves could tell them no more than that "it is the custom"; or, "we come to see Sarah, as our ancestors." Their meeting is at a place where, as far as records go, never stood a large town; therefore this cannot be the relic of some forgotten fair. Ratis, the name of the crag under the church, where the Marys landed, is certainly somewhat like the Gitano word for blood or sacrifice, derived from which is their own name Erraté. They have traditions: one that Sarah was their queen formerly;

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another that their forbears came from a wrecked island under the sun (for this they watch the sunset) with the rest of the common amplifications of the Atlantis myth, as the Aztecs in their part of the world told of the drowned island of Aztlan.

Their own high-cheeked, red-tinted, straight-haired look, very different from that of the ordinary Gypsy, or from that of the peoples among which they live, is much like the bleak-faced warriors, who in carved, fantastical, floral armour stand out of the cliffs of Mexico. Poor stuff for science, but heady wine for the imagination of romance. Nations, like families, have strange origins, and strange fortunes could we trace them. Aztec, Minoan, or wandering Hindoo, as Borrow thought—whatever they are, this wandering race of Gitanos—they have come far. And though they seem fortunate above stay-at-homes, in freedom from the net of laws, and though they sweeten with pure Liberty their hard bread beside unfrequented roads and in woods, yet they, too, are ruled by a hard obligation, irrational and imperative, pulled by a Law above laws, to visit once a year, at the cost of whatever fatigue or distance, their mysterious Mary-Sarah of the Sea in Camargue.



## *The Frieze of the Monument*

WHEN, as at Christmas time, the flood-current of traffic, foot and wheels, is up, in Central London, the passengers' impatient rush on their unhandy errands is intercepted at the busiest corners by ambushes of beggars. They stand at their mock trades, like clots in the hurry and jostling, with the properties of their compulsory and legal make-belief—trays of unsaleable matches, bootlaces, pencilled envelopes—with advertisements of their infirmities or misfortunes round their afflicted, bent necks; without showing by anything but their careful choice of station, any expectation of relief or pity.

Every country produces the beggars it appreciates. The English beggar is as distinctive as the English judge. There is no ostentatious call for alms, no vocal appeal, as in the more direct beggars of other countries. These beg with their poise, the droop of the shoulders, the insinuation of their shiverings. The obvious insufficiency of their wares to keep even a dog alive, a result of the legal fiction such as the English delight in, which makes them pretend to be hawkers, is not the least powerful part of their advertisement to the charitable. And the best and most reputedly successful of

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them have carefully allowed the framed letter of hospital guarantee, the sign of their trade, to become blurred and brown, like old-established firms in the City. So the suspicious almsgiver cannot, even if he wished, decipher the claims of such long established beggars, to find from what lamentable complication of blindness or loss they have suffered all these years. The ingrained national taste and fashion is naturally most effective in those who have to sell. The shops, and the beggars of London are the clearest mirror of what Englishmen like. So there is no crooked, too distressing physical misery, no open sores, no horrifying hoofed and boxed deformities such as do best on the Boulevards. London would not tolerate a crawling beggar. Each has a decent, sufficiently sad reason to impede the traffic.

Blindness is, as everywhere, the commonest and most compensated. But, short of this supreme misfortune, I have seen beggars here whose own account would not have wrung a sou from the youngest midinette, though she is the most easily charitable of the human race. One of the best of Regent Street beggars has nothing worse to offer to the Christmas pity of shoppers than "I am nearly blind." Another, I have been told seriously, in a pitch not far away, claims only "Deaf, and rheumatic." For

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those whose woes are shocking, there are, no doubt, the hospitals, where London's charity is most really efficient. For beggars in the smart districts the first condition is that they must look deserving, that is, neat, soberly dressed; and a carefully patched, pathetic boot, much repaired and nattily cleaned, is worth more than a lost limb. There are skilful beggars among this class, with a technique, a distinction of professional style which is quite out of the reach of the crude, clamouring hordes of Spain and France.

The use of contrast, the artless choice of station—near the jeweller's or luxury cake shops—is well done; as is the choice of soiled picture postcards (but in a spotless cigar-box), which my own favourite beggar woman in Pall Mall affects. She wears mourning crepe in her tidy churchgoing hat; she stands in the most shivering doorway—there are others, doubtless, she has reason to reject—and fixes the price of her stock amazingly low. There are only a dozen of the cards and three boxes of matches, and the cards are a halfpenny apiece. Even the most absent-minded financier, if he wished to buy a thumb-printed postcard of the Abbey, could not mistake this for an ordinary business. She does well. But, after all, well means a few shillings a day, not the boundless sums

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which defamers have mentioned. I have watched her many times; she has a good beat; but gifts come not more than five or six times in the hour, and only through the afternoon and the hour before lunch. They are seldom more than pennies; I have never seen the stream, one a minute, which would make up a pound a day during regular begging hours.

Their enforced outward show of a trade adds much to the character of these beggars. They have strange shifts, some of them. One was a woman, who stood on Christmas Eve in the Shaftesbury Avenue gutter, within smelling distance of the hot chocolate buns of a famous eating-house. Her placard read, "I am not used to doing this," and she had a tray of sealed envelopes addressed "To a Good Friend," in pencil. But they did not contain a blessing, as I hoped, or the expected full story of her woes. Inside was only a copy of the lunatic Chain Prayer, with its curse on him who will not copy it out three times and send it, within twenty-four hours, to his friends. She was another outpost of the internationale of hysteria which universal literacy has grown, one day perhaps to take even stranger forms of deep stupidity—this thin, law-complying woman, with her simple, rewarded faith in the claims of being a beginner. Though the out-

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ward queerness of such a figure—selling curses and crazy tasks to all who pitied her, among the angelic, blond children, and the moody parents, weighed down with packages of pleasure for the great feast—like a witch-doctor outside a church, is striking enough, there is even more surprise in the pavement artists, whom wet and cold have put for this month out of work.

It is often under the frown of gigantic, florid banks, or in rebated street railings, or even sometimes, in quiet unfrequented squares against the austere palisades of some Adam mansion, that you step unawares on a part of the pavement covered with coloured chalk. If it is a fine day, near by is squatted the maker of these coloured webs, a shabby young man, quite excused by his bent from the reverent neatness of other London beggars. There lies his capful of chalks, his change cap for pence, and panels of the Prince of Wales, President Harding, a copy of the Studdy puppy from a magazine, an invocation to the passer to "Give if I am Worthy." And invariably, dragging admiration even from those who have heard of Giotto's fly, is a brown British banknote, with the corner artfully turned up, a masterpiece of deceptive art. All done by hand, and with chalks only. The use of these pictures for pleasure or curiosity, is, unlike bootlaces, only

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momentary; the eye of the passer may rob by resting too long, so all within sight of his wares are called on to pay. This is the only English beggar who asks boldly. His sunsets, his volcanoes, his ships in a storm at sea, whether copied from photographs, from the great works of the Academy masters, or as he sometimes admits, out of his head, are (some Expressionist explained to me) really pasquinades, and the mighty of the Royal Academy if they pass, and dare to look, see only a poor man doing badly what they do well, with the handicap of chalks, a stone canvas, and often the annoyance of a cellar light whose ungrateful outline shows through his effort.

But this sect of pavement artists is rare, outside the run of beggars in bearing and own consideration: a world of class distinction separates them from those of the sister art, of music: the lordly, ten strong ex-soldiers' bands, who rattle their boxes without fear, the men who take their wives and babies with the barrel organ, to express the dispirited soul of by-streets in worn out tunes. Or that old woman I met outside the long park that borders Piccadilly, at past midnight, tailorwise on the pavement, winding a queer bubbling hand harmonium, the size of a hat box, the very father of all gramophones, which played, with many a



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gasp and gap, perforated records of "Scenes that are Brightest," "Never take the Horse Shoe from the Door," and, I remember, "Silver Threads among the Gold."

Most Londoners are deeply mistrustful of beggars; the legend of their riches and savings books is universal here—their rags, I may believe, come from Clarkson's, and their heart-breaking cringe is from a school of the theatre. Such sceptics will tell me that there is a great factory for these hand harmoniums, which does a roaring trade, and that the chipping of the notes is a secret of the industry. On me it had its effect. The silence and averted look of the old woman, even if it was simply a police regulation, seemed the sign of a heart-broken misery, which faltered and quavered in the little tinkle of the tunes. So no doubt an Israelitish woman played the penitentiary Psalms of Zion, on a cracked harp, in the empty streets of old Babylon. The contemplation of misery from which one has escaped and is well away, is stranger than those who have kept out of it can imagine.

There is a long panorama of beggars in London, who are silent and do not speak, and have this poor pretence of being pedlars and merchants of small parcels of nothing. I once saw eight blind men standing together in the Char-

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ing Cross Road. I once saw a tall phantom, who wore a girdle of feathers, dancing to himself in Dean Street. And there are all the fellows who tumble and penny-whistle to overcome the dignified aversion that is at their mercy in early-door queues. But in all their various imitations of Victorian art, or hawkers and pedlars, or music-hall turns in the open air, the many changing forms of the excuse, concealments of the outstretched palm, that the laws of the city may impose on them, with all their grades and pitches, it is never hidden what a uniform quality unites them.

These are all deserters from the army of life, in its wars, as criminals are mutineers. They are stragglers who have given up the fight and live by hourly surrenders, whose white flag is hung round their necks; too old, too poor, too stupid, too meek to keep up the campaign. Some of them, as the clever insist, may have found a new possibility for fight in their fall, may acquire savings, may sometimes treat themselves to beer and dinner. All that that can mean is, they have taken up a rearward position and made a stand on a defensible line on their broken retreat, and now make headway against police and incredulity, as men in other parts of life. No one ever became a beggar from free choice. But the rest:

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the real, the poor bundles of tatters who heap themselves up at night, under arches and shop porches, and in the day shuffle after cabs to help the feaster enjoy his dinner better by contrast, or blackmail happiness for pennies with their only look—these are the battered frieze at the base of civilisation. Their barrel orchestra of failure and regret, heard under the great, bold street lamps in the evening, often meets the mood of this gloomy, close-shut, line after line of black brick houses, this London, these heavily ornamented shops, these stone and iron echoing pavements, more than the rush and clatter of traffic, and all the noises of Life, to which they no longer belong.

## *An Empire's Funeral in the Strand*

I HEARD them crying German Marks in the Strand. A long row of hawkers stood selling, along the crook of the kerb, with sheafs of notes in hand, and broad white placards round their collars; and on these in black letters, daubed by the painter's brush:

HUNDRED THOUSAND MARKS  
ONLY TWO D.  
EVERY ONE GENUINE.

They whined this out, in a run-the-gauntlet chorus. One of them was a woman, in drabbed mackintosh, and a labourer's worsted cap, who shouted loudest what was written. They stood apart to give each other a chance. Between them there were down-at-heels boys, with clusters of red and yellow balloons, like lustrous grapes and melons, and men with little clock-work clowns, that tumbled in the mud, and jumping dogs of brown cotton, and matchboxes and tin toys. The 'bus crowds, pushing back from their lunch counters, edged them into the oily gutter. Newspaper runners, with racing specials, jostled their packets: but they called their wares loudly and did good business. Even the ex-soldiers' lamentable bands, with all their tarnished brass, could not drown what they

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were crying: German Marks, German Marks; for Two Pence.

So the Empire of the strong is at last for sale, with its pride and hopes, and the blood of the world's most wonderful army, and the effort, dreams, and zeal of five generations of sober workmen. Strange wares for the Strand, on a drizzling day. They rustled them enticingly in our faces: crispy new bundles of many loose pages, each with a strong scowling mediæval half-profile, etched on paper with a bluish blush, that runs into tainted purple at the edge, and deepens at the back into the green brown tinge of turned meat. Each guaranteed. "Look at the number." And guilloched over with fine circles and hatchments, to cheat the last forger.

One hawker lets a handful slip down on the pavement. The notes are blown along the street slime, to mix with paper sandwich bags, wrappers from chocolate boxes, tatters of morning newspapers, in the dirty refuse of the town. And he does not care. So passes the pride of Germany, the lords of the world, with these ill-coloured relics of the chasm that has swallowed her. One of these papers that hawkers thumb and hold out to win a meal was once a share in the richest, most ordered civilisation of material wealth in the world. To get its like millions

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left their warm beds unreluctantly, to work in frosty weather, for thirty years: or squandered their sight in unremitting study: they mapped and planned and hoped: men were killed for a tithe of this, and men killed themselves steadfastly to get it. This was the tangible, sufficient reward for a lifetime of honest endeavour, which is all now lost, the hoard of fathers for their children, and the good prize of life, in the country where it was best worth while. These leaves which tatterdemalions drop unheeded out of their fingers, were the promises of a secure mighty State, to which only the best and most fortunate of its working millions might aspire. Each of these notes meant an old age of comfort, in a trim, flowered cottage, consideration and plenty, food and drink and linen and silver, long years of ease and the enjoyment of the golden mean, and peace. These hawkers peddle them all day long for a place on the rope in a dosshouse, or a mouthful of vile cocoa. They are gimcrack merchandise, these rags from an old, honourable banner.

Nor could they get these miserable gains if the passers gave their money's worth. There is no coin small enough to pay the market value of a hundred thousand marks. Some buy, curiously, paying their coppers for a queer souvenir, or scenting a joke in any bargain that is



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strange. But most of the buyers are poor people, to whom twopence is something, and the exchange is a mystery. They will hold them as an investment. They know nothing of markets; the doom of Germany is but a rumour to them, and they remember, with the same uncalculating awe, the name of the once potent mark, as ignorant Wends and Ruthenes honoured, long after it was fallen, the name and prestige of the Roman Empire. Most of the buyers are Jews, of the poorer sort, in whose recollection the long hours of labour they had once given to gain five of these they are buying fifty thousand to a penny are still clear. They remember, far back, the tall chimneys, the quiet and ponderous avenues of stone, where rich masters lived, the firm, unalterable look of riches and power in German cities once seen, and the countless army, the myriad workshops, the supreme Kaiser and the German Mark. And though they know more distinctly the incredible storm that has swept these things into bankruptcy without bottom, yet some doubt remains, and the dregs of disbelief that all this can really have happened.

The rest of the buyers, more ignorant, unreading folk, though they know only from hearsay the rich power that the Jews have seen, from their ghettos of Frankfurt and Berlin, yet

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hold with superstition to a name and a standard once imperial: think they are making a good speculation, and that one day, somehow, whatever the newspapers may say, they will get back the fortunes on which they have now advanced Germany two pence. Set that, too, to the account, when despairing over impermanence, the death of solid empires, the ruin that lies in wait for human effort, however limitless, the stupidity and change that brings everything mortal to dust, that when Germany and her Empire had fallen lower than any nation, when her notes were peddled in the Strand, that the poor of London paid three times their price for her paper promise to repay, and the imprint of her beaten eagles.

All day now, for a week, the Strand has been selling the pride of the conquered briskly. Even at night the trade does not slack. In Soho, at a corner, where the gaslight is too dim for the passer to count his change, there was an armless soldier, his medals sewn on awry, who called out his thousand mark notes. In that place and time, there was something lugubrious that I missed in the Strand, and the barrel-organ near by did not make it more cheerful. People were clustered about him, talking in an undertone, holding his samples to the light to catch the clumsy watermark. It was a patriotic

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organ, with war songs, and played Tipperary with many trills and stretchings, hardly recognisable as the same we sung in Flanders in 1915. The war that was to sweep away the excrescences of civilisation and its rough way, like a wind to do cleansing work, has swept us very clean. This seller, these notes, that tune seemed to combine in a ceremony of ending, a definite rite with ritual and symbols of the days that we shall never see again, beside which the trumpets and banners of the Armistice march past, were only a prelude.

But kings are not usually buried by kings. The old German Empire was there being buried and its last wishes read, under the gaslight in a mean street, in the city of its enemies, by a broken soldier and a ragged crowd.

## *Dies Iræ, Dies Illa*

**R**HYTHM is the most ancient soul of Time; it is the servant of creation and the great destroyer.

It shook Paris the day the franc broke. For a day and a night those who heard the news from Verdun unbroken, and were not moved at the sound of cannons from Château Thierry, were sick and frightened. It came a day of heavy rain: since Genoa the ruin of the Reich had weighed down her neighbour, and the *Banque de France* was grappling with the tariffed dollar and the wheat shortage. Week by week the franc had been dragged along down, joltingly and resisting, with many returns and every foot of the way disputed, to the almost unheard of figure of 69 (instead of 25) to the pound sterling. Citizens, on their way home, turned to the back page of the *Temps* to read the exchange list, doubtfully; and children held their tongues until the fortunes of the day had been commented on by their anxious elders. The tense battle with the exchanges scared this people as nothing else could have done. In the depths of their character, far below their hard vanity and national jealousy, below even their instinctive love for the Family and Law, is the mainspring of Possession, the triple motive of

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inheritance, conservation and legacy. No careful Esquimaux is more tied to his paltry store of harpoons and stone blubber lamps than the Frenchman to his family hoard. He traces it back in legend to the thrifts of Roman provincial ancestors: Saracens and Mongols, no more than the brief revolution of the dispossessed, could wrench from the free French burghers their savings and their dowries.

Even to-day, the man who starts life without some debt to his grandfather is as rare and unfortunate in France as one born blind. Englishman's God, Dutchman's sweetheart, Frenchman's fortune, these are their last trenches: take these and they are done. The Parisian wonders at the theology of Hyde Park, *his* Sabbath task is to ponder on the financial bulletin of the week, with gravity and devotion.

The rhythm of destruction edged out first on the ticking machines, that day. At noon the portico of the Bourse bellowed out panic into the rain, pounding out the figures of the slump in francs:

Sixty sev'n, sixty sev'n, sixty eight, sixty nine.

It spread in the City, it seemed sounding through the damp air. The window agencies in the Faubourg Montmartre stuck up the score of the new tune in sprawling round hand-written

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sheets, and groups paused on the pavements to read and hear. It throbbed into the restaurants through the swinging doors, and dinned in every customer's inner ear its ringing and buzzing measure; not clear, yet, but sickening and discouraging. From the Boulevards it drifted by every road; it reached the Plaine Monceau, and in ten minutes the Cafés of the Porte Maillot had ceased their chatter to listen. The crowd in the 'buses that lumbered over the bridges to the Left Bank stopped their talk, harkening for the tune the motor was beating out and pressing their white faces to the windows to watch the rising flood of the Seine. Muggy weather: not cold, yet everyone was shivering. And the rain drummed those figures on the pane.

The streets were empty. Midinettes walk in the arcades out of the wet and forget to munch their chocolate. In fine restaurants, the music is spoilt by what the lunchers hear in their heads, strumming and thrumming, and they wonder what the news will be after lunch. Cheap eaters shuffle their feet on the sawdust floor of *gargottes* to hurry the waiter with their bill. In the rain, the outside clerks of the Bourse, coatless and hatless, are standing on the outskirts of the screaming market, hunching their shoulders and tiptoeing to see the



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blackboard of the foreign shares, or bending to snatch the slips of paper from wild boys who rush out from the interior with the latest course of the exchanges. The days of Panama are come back and worse, and the whole market, *terme* and *comptant*, is raving mad: bank shares falling, rentes falling, and foreign shares mounting like the tide. Inside the ring of drenched coats, squashed up together, the yelling orchestra of brokers' agents is fighting for the tune of the market, finding it by snatches, being shoved off into crashing discord, by the resistance that comes from within the House. The mighty rhythm is struggling to shake itself loose from hundreds of snatchy substitutes, which France's defenders are fighting with fists and lungs to impose. All the time, the rise and fall of the hubbub of a panicked market being dragged along to the brink. Passers in the square below turn their anxious faces to the incredible noise of the rout under the Porch. Thoughts turned inward, each thinking of his own, of the banknotes and untouchable securities smouldering away in his banker's safe, and nothing to be done; of the invisible worm eating away his wife's pearls at the core, fortunes in danger, the whole country shaking with that commotion. All their hopes swaying and re-

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turning in that mighty rhythm of destruction which is hammering down the clamour of the Bourse.

69 . 69 . 69.

The sheerest fall in history, the swallowing gulf.

Inside, the big men, the high agents of change, Government millionaires and custodians of the national fortune stand in a ring behind wooden rails, under the glass roof, doing their best. The *Banque de France* has come in and sends help every ten minutes by breathless telephonist. The Ministry of Finance is calling insistently and gravely on its friends. Stocks of guilders, dollars, pounds are pouring into the pit. Every drop is contested, every gust of the wicked tune is smothered with fierce shouting by the defenders. The excitement of the hour sharpens their voices; all the chiefs are there, stout-hearted gentlemen in grey suits who have won through many crashes, nodding to each other, patting the rail of the enclosure, bending to take orders from the perspiring brokers. All minor rhythms trail away here and the two major measures are at grips with each other. *Up with it, Up, Up*; and the resistless *Down, Down, Down*, that is winning. Over their heads the flicker-

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ing blackboards of the changes, and the crooning chant of the fight outside in their ears.

The majestic drum-beat of the new rhythm disengages itself from the puny man in the centre, grows clearer, finds itself, flinging away their opposition, as a train runaway reaches its speed and holds it. Then we heard the meditative peculiar march of the thing, unchecked and clear for a moment, the rhythm that wore away Egypt and Babylon and all the lost civilisations, that is shaking all France from the bottom until it sends it to join the ruins of past time. In a sickening second

Seventy-one, seventy-two, seventy-two,  
Seventy-three, seventy-two, seventy-three.

Four points drop! The hundred boys ripped the scribble out of the hands of their chiefs and charged for the doors, jammed, broke and pelted into the clerks outside screeching their news. A sound, hideous, came back over their heads. The grave men in the ring sweated at it. Then they began again the uneven battle.

Early editions of the *Intransigent* were flung on the kiosks by muddy bicyclists. Shopkeepers ran out bare headed into the drizzle to buy. They went slowly back, clutching the sheets; stray purchasers found them distraught, reluctant to sell and anxious: unwilling to give

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good merchandise for paper money. The rhythm was in their heads, killing their energy, or they would have closed their shops. This is no inspiring fear: it sickens action and clogs mind.

The Deputies made their way to the Chamber, slushing through the mud or spattering along in automobiles. The buzz of the corridors is heavier and slower; intriguers have their thoughts elsewhere, and everyone seems to be listening to something in the distance, only faintly to be heard in this sheltered place. Who can struggle against this that has come through the will of inscrutable God? Is there Law in this, who can comprehend it, how can men oppose the tide? Poincaré sits at his desk under the glimmer of the chandelier, with an unopened law book before him. Mandel has forgotten his enemies and the betrayal of Clemenceau; huge Daudet and shabby Herriot do not glare at each other across the hemicycle. The prophetic days are come upon us all, and the ends of the world: hates and hopes are of no avail. Some are yawning nervously, hands in pockets, heads sunk on shoulders. The bell sounds small and sweet in this new lull.

They will have another mood later on, when Louis Loucheur speaks, queer, ugly man, almost a Kalmuck, richest in France, and no more

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afraid of ruin than Clemenceau of wars. When the captains tremble, the leader arrives; Loucheur is going to clutch to-day a moment of mastery over these tremblers. They will listen to him later on.

But outside the spell of his smile and confidence, the citizens of Paris prepare for bed. The throb has subsided in the darkness, yet they feel it trembling, though they cannot hear. All night in attics and in the broad windows of stately apartments, lights behind the curtains show that the master and head of the family is sleepless, thinking of what has come upon him. And through the length and breadth of the land, in his imagination, he hears the beating of a giant Tom-Tom, muffled, in a measured and powerful rhythm, and shaking gently and firmly every high tower and cathedral, every castle and city: faint clouds of powdered mortar rising in the night air from crumbling walls, threatening the day when all shall fall in on the treasures and secret possessions of this people, from Calais to Marseilles: the rhythm of destruction; the breathing of Time; that enemy of man's efforts and boasting which has before covered up many civilisations, as ordered as ours, in the oblivion of the desert.

Seventy-one, seventy-two, seventy-three,

Seventy-two, seventy-one, seventy-four,

## *Profiteering in the Dead*

THE war cemeteries are filled: the most common sight in Europe is a memorial. In the centre of the ritual of this France is an unsmiling Angel of bronze or stone, standing tip-toe or stooping, always with a palm branch and a shrapnel helmet. It is set up in every village, among the soldiers' graves. Its commonplace awkwardness, its air of the wholesale manufactory, might even endear it to simple grief, or to remembrance which needs no art. Passers might forget its individual, too common, history of petty graft: the mayor's unfair commission which gave its designing to a cousinly architect; or the great House in Paris, which shared the profits of its making. This past of profiteering might be forgiven, if the war prophets would let it alone.

But M. Poincaré and his sect have made it the centre for their preaching, and appropriated its meaning for themselves. They have turned the quiet place in which it stands into the noisiest corner in the village. Every week, in the big, silent cars of their fortunes, or less luxuriously in special trains, the Government orators go to the ends of France to visit their Angel, and to make in its shadow their week-end speeches. War profiteers, generals whom the



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first month's promotion took out of danger, civilians who were indispensable, Bordeaux Ministers who followed their President's flight at the first cannonade, stand weekly in the war cemeteries to swear solemnly they are prepared to do it all over again.

Monsieur Poincaré himself finds this platform so convenient—there, surrounded by a vast company who must hold their tongues—that he rarely explains his policy except in war cemeteries. He has become identified in the popular imagination with burial grounds and the *Marseillaise*. His enemies say he has come to take pleasure in these sombre audiences, and caricature often shows him dressed as an undertaker's mute, a palm wreath borrowed from a monument in his hand, smiling. We have had speeches from him from the shadow of War Angels, cemeteries, and cenotaphs, for the last three months, weekly. Each of them has been a glorification of violence, a defence of war and the arbitrage of the bayonet, and a call to the dead to witness that he refuses peace.

The fashion has spread. Every war prophet in Europe—in Italy, in Germany, in Turkey—catches his tone and replies or applauds or imitates with a like solemnity. A month ago, a poor Alsatian conscript in the French army

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of occupation, named Schmidt, a hardworking, unthinking man, from all accounts his new allegiance too recent for blazing patriotism, was treacherously shot at midnight on the Station Square at Essen. M. Poincaré—from a cemetery—punctually devoted a Saturday speech to the unhappy fellow, swore to the angels Schmidt shall be avenged, and that the wish for a relentless war, which he boldly attributed to the dead Alsatian, shall be fulfilled.

In another town, in the Ruhr, a little girl, innocently curious to see soldiers, is shot by a nervous fool of a corporal. Straightway, the loudest patriots of the Reich rush to her grave to swear the same bloody oaths and to administer the same consolations of vengeance, though in the more secret tone their position requires. The parents themselves are obliged to bid them silence.

For in Europe to-day each corpse is made the occasion for ten others, each slaughter the reason for another. When the Poincarés and Ludendorffs have brought a man to death they have not finished with him. They use his body to slay others. The most precious gain of Nationalism from war and bloodshed (and they have many) is this profiteering in the dead. Their chief voters, partisans who cannot disown them, are these dead, and they drag

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them pitilessly out to bear witness for the upholding of the men and the policies that killed them. No matter what the politics, the doubts, the hopes of the fallen, whether, as so many millions of them did, they witnessed by their ends their faith in the ending of war for ever, once dead they are automatically enrolled under the banners of a mad Nationalism and Jingo reaction, unprotesting and eternal witnesses against themselves. Many of us but for a chance might have stayed where we were hit, to be called to witness by a Poincaré in some obscure village that he would stand by us, and sweep our ideals into ruin. It adds another bitterness to our memories.

But, meanwhile, this exploitation goes on; M. Poincaré, like the rest, secure of his hearing, raises the dead again, who in life perhaps cursed him; makes them applaud his policy, guarantee his violence and his ambition; and drapes his party in their inviolable shrouds. If they could answer but once, these witnesses of his, come within sound of him, and answer him, could the tombs he thus impudently invokes open but once, and reply to the war makers who have robbed them, millions, of light and life, what would they say? What but: Pay your debts; as we have paid; keep the Peace, as we do here.

## *Shaking the German Ant-Heap*

ESSEN.

**H**ERE in the wings, the play is distorted. The actors have lost their majesty and the tragedy its proportion. The stage is set for bigger things. But they are being played invisibly, off in Hamburg, where Herr Stinnes is gone in a hurry, and in Paris where the Cavalier Foch and the Comité des Forges hold the strings. Here in the gloom, the puppets strut their hour of make-belief at freewill, while the French Horizontal Trust and the German Vertical Trust work out their mysterious aims.

This is a Titanic ant-heap, where mankind comes near the insect in his monstrous factories, his geometrical temples, his subterranean runs and his aerial railways, his inhuman cubist banks and cellular tenements, and the bitter mathematics which reduce these surly millions, in their monotonous tasks and lives to unhuman animaculæ. It is a strange, brooding region, wrapt in evil-smelling smoke by day and lit up by a glare at night—even in peace time, more terrifying to the unaccustomed foreigner than any remote city of Arabia or Thibet. Now when the ant-heap is being shaken, when soldiery is marching through the streets, and when

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tanks park their shapes under the shadows of the gasometers, when panic is abroad through the smoke, it is the most unpleasant place in the world for the imaginative man.

On this terrible stage, a queer puppet-farce is being played by manikins who mistake their *rôles*, miss their cues, squabble and tumble together at the solemn moments in the most ludicrous way. General Degoutte and Herr Fritz Thyssen, M. Coste and his amazing troupe of bedraggled "engineers," are puppets to delight Cervantes. The soldier is a dreary fellow, intoxicated by the penny-dreadful newspapers of Paris Royalism. He lives in a dream, walking with the fancies of Maurice Barrès and Maurras, where reality is only a book, with a key, he holds. He sees himself hourly, spurred and glorious, though insufferably melancholy, in the midst of high conspiracies, for Rhineland Republics that are to bring back the Golden Days, when the lost tribes of Celt-dom shall be strangely awaked from wicked Prussian enchantment, by the sword Charlemagne lent him and the prayers of Joan of Arc—where musty Herr Smeets, stuffed pockets and all, is a living Arthur, and muddled Herr Dorten a Percivale.

His Sancho Panza trots uneasily beside him through this infernal land, with a long-unused

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T square under his arm; his is a less pleasant dream. One morning he was snatched away from the dusty file-room of the Board of Works where thirty slumberous years entitled him to a pension, and ordered to exploit the working Ruhr. To help him they found fifty out-of-work draughtsmen. His chief comforted him, no doubt: "If the Magnates resist, turn them out. Send the profits monthly. Danger, yes: but the General will avenge you. And take no notice of his mad ideas."

To meet this ballad couple, so launched into prodigious adventure, the invisible masters sent one Fritz Thyssen to head the resistance. "Poor Fritz," they call him. Until ten days ago he lived in easy mediocrity, employed as his father's son, to sign small cheques and attend directors' meetings when told. He was a good fellow and had certainly never done any harm. While he was still rubbing his eyes, behold him a national hero, bulwark of invaded Germany, certain of his statue in the town which ignored him. He reached this without a word or an act. The lean Knight-errant, peering through the haze, had perceived him, heard his name, and charged. In vain did portly M. Coste snatch his sleeve. General Degoutte knew that Herr Fritz was the mysterious chief of whom Daudet had prophesied, Pan-Prussian, the se-



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cret and almost all-powerful head of the Inner Gang, which was sending down the franc, paying Mr. Lloyd George, M. Clemenceau, and M. Millerand, keeping the United States dry to the detriment of wine-growers, and the Rhinelanders in the error that they were German. The amiable heir of the Thyssens did not try to protest or even to understand; he dutifully attended the meetings to which the General summoned him with solemnity; he opened not his mouth, did not lift his finger, and finally went, together with five dour chief clerks, to gaol in Mainz in a closed car.

He was enviously watched out of sight by M. Coste, whose way out is not so easy. The malicious say that by this time M. Coste has discovered that half of his band of experts, by some mistake, turn out to be motor-car engineers, and were forced to admit it when ordered instantly to administer the affairs of twenty coal mines. Such knowledge can only make him more miserable. Caught in the wake of the furious Knight, he is dragged up and down the district, through lofty workshops so populous with machines that it would be a man's work for a day to count them, down mine-shafts, among forests of chimneys and coke ovens seemingly illimitable; he is shown all this prodigy of organisation and industry,

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and told proudly: "All this is yours to work and reap." Hardly one of his band can ask for beer in German; whole libraries of ledgers in crabbed writing have been taken away by the too prudent Trust, yet mountains of them remain, to be controlled, mastered, kept. . . . So M. Coste has plenty to do. The General does his share, arresting, picketing, ordering, proclaiming, threatening, suppressing strikes and making new ones, he passes over the district like a blizzard; he has even been seen to smile, for he is certain things will go well now, now that the resistance is broken and Magnate Thyssen in gaol.

Meanwhile, the things that matter are working out to their appointed end behind this fooling. Hugo Stinnes, master of coke so long that he is come to look like a piece of it himself, black, gritty man, is in Berlin stirring the weak Government to action, standing behind their desks when they waver, dictating their notes to the workmen of the State mines and railways, pushing them to rebellion against the crazy occupation, sniffing for the *incident*, cursing the workers for their cowardice in not risking their skins in his cause, sharpening the leaders of his newspapers. And all the time keeping the door open in Paris for a last moment's arrangement with the Comité des Forges. Shall the German

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coke go to Lorraine, or the French ore come to the Ruhr? Shall the iron law of iron, immemorially established, that iron goes to coke and not coke to iron be broken in spite of him? Who is to lead the European Steel Trust with its innumerable branches—the conservative, timorous French, with their half-formed, one-day organisation, trusting to the bayonets of their soldiers and their uncomprehending public opinion, or Stinnes, monster-maker and ruler, who, in spite of all and through all, backed by nothing but his brains and his own force has already created the hydra Vertical Trust which, by law economic and evolutionary, is rightful heir of the future in Europe? Behind the tattered red, white, and blue banners of General Degoutte, and thinly covered by the mummery of the Experts Commission of M. Coste, this is the question which is being wrestled out here. The gallant General is only a screen for economic blackmail, made by one great company for its own material purposes against another: and the *Wacht am Rhein*, sung by desperate, thin-faced boys, moved once more by the cries of fatherland and patriotism, is an ingenious blind put up by a determined, mighty captain of industry to defend what he has, to insure the illimitable profits of the future. Is it a farce or a tragedy?

## *Mah Jongg and the Millionaires*

GAMES, like women's fashions, are better clues to an epoch than its laws and statesmen. Impossible without white wigs, and long suits of *Ombre*, to make a clear image of the endless brightness of the eighteenth century; and ping-pong and leg-of-mutton sleeves are necessary helps to our hazy memories of the beginnings of this century. To-day the unmistakable marks of post-war Europe are shingled hair and Mah Jongg. Our great-grandchildren will no doubt imagine our times, however they judge them, when their world was made for them out of this jumble of Relativism, Communism, Reparations, in a vivid mental picture of thin, elegant women, with close-cropped hair, playing a Chinese game, by shaded electric light, just out of hearing of the throb of saxophones: to wile away the revolution.

Mah Jongg has sprung too suddenly into vogue for anyone to have remarked precisely the direction from which it came: whether from China eastwards, and crossed to Europe with millionaires on the Transatlantic, as most believe; or whether, as a more romantic story has it, it reached England direct, through an irony of certain Mandarins. An English merchant, this legend says, saved three Chinese clients

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from a bandit general in Peking. In gratitude he was offered either a thousand pounds' worth of silk or an initiation in the "secret and noble game of Mah Jongg." He chose the silk, but longed to satisfy his curiosity as well. The Mandarins consenting, he was taught the delectable mystery; and on the first night lost the value of the silk he had been given.

However it arrived, Mah Jongg was predestined to beguile the boredom of Europe's post-war rich. Its exotic complications, that fit the atmosphere of high stakes which somehow surrounds it, and the luxury, outshining any mere playing cards, of its hundred and thirty-six ivory and bamboo inlaid pieces, fits exactly into the mood of the present-day millionaires of Paris, Berlin, and Moscow. They are survivors of sudden death, and the protégées of sudden, dazzling chance. It is a game to suit profiteers, mercantis of various breeds, schieber, valuta hyenen, pescicani, however the have-nots like to call them, whose life has been topsy-turvy and romantic, and whom the marvellous changes of past years, and the redoubtable possibilities of the future, inspire with a sort of poetry, made of fatalism and surprise. So the element of Chance, their only friend, heads the attractions of Mah Jongg. Its Winds, Dragons, its blue Circles, and stylised green Bam-

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boos, its queer little black Characters, and the quaint Flowers, that give such illegitimate advantages, are in the mood of the age that has discarded kings and queens, as well as hearts and spades, and lives mysteriously.

There is a savoury pleasure in the power to Pung, to Chow, and to Kang, to a class that has not much learning. And if one of the players is a "Dreamer" out of his turn, what strange emotions he may have in contemplation of the tiny red lacquer Walls of China, that hold up his Tiles, and into which his partners seek for the Breach: enduring relics of more lasting times! In his play for a Pure or an Impure hand, he finds strange meanings in the Tiles: the East Wind from which the game blows looks like a small bird perched on the mast of a twisted junk; the North Wind, two cobra heads and the sword that lopped them. In certain moods, and when news comes of another shaking of the economic spillikins on which he has builded his life, certain of these little tokens take on a more sinister look—the hollow-cheeked little dice are images of hunger; he sees Green Dragon as a grinning face from the crazy east where Russia lies, with mustachios that bristle with hatred, more for his like than the conventional aristocracy he has displaced; the blankness of White Dragon is odious; and Red Dragon is



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then more than a meaningless sign; it is a subtle Chinese heart, pierced with a doubtful dagger. Everywhere in Europe, where new riches are collected in palace hotels, they play Mah Jongg nowadays, after the Bourse is closed, and the game eases and betrays their preoccupations at the same time. I have seen rich speculators play it in a wonder hotel in Düsseldorf, where the sound of shots outside punctuated the runs: and they still counted the insidious points that mount up like Fate, wrapped in their game. Ordinary luxuries are not strong tasting enough for these days, and for such people the perfumes must be concentrated, and from far away. Revolution is waiting.

But here in London, where too they play Mah Jongg, the game seems different. It has no decadent hothouse flavour. It is a game like the others; an innocent craze, not a symbolic gesture. It is played by solid citizens whose riches have nothing adventurous. Though they still pull the Moon out of the Sea, and hold the Four Winds of the Round, yet they do it awkwardly, smiling apologetically at being so mixed up with poetry; and keep the points low. As London plays it, the watcher, who never dared interrupt the picturesque players of the Continent, those lords

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of speculation and ruin, dares to inquire about the rules. Then he may learn that behind all the decorations of strange terms, and surprising suits, Mah Jongg is not an entirely new game, even in Europe, but contains the elements of many old-fashioned ones, some of them very homely. The Blue, Red and Green of the Tiles, in a Gloucester Place drawing-room, are innocent colours after all, and the sinister significance of their mixture in the One of Circles, may stand for a childish garden, as well as for the mosaic court of a casino. He may even suspect that with thirty-four fanciful suits, instead of four, Mah Jongg is comically like Old Maid, or any of the kindred games which pass the evening away before bedtime in country rectories. Bamboo and ivory are solid materials, and when their elders are tired of it, this decadent amusement of Europe's weary and desperate gamblers may live on for years, in those innocent hands from which it almost seems that the Chinese inventors took the idea. Instead of being played in arctic silence, amid splendours of glass and gold, in the shadows of tragedy, it will be spread out of a broken casket, on a homely table, under a country oil-lamp, and be used for an excuse for putting off bedtime. Children's games, after all, are the only immortality for many high things. The

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Battle of Waterloo is now the name and inspiration of a rough pastime for boys; Guy Fawkes's plot an excuse for fireworks; ceremonial sacrifice only survives in Europe in kissing games. Our present bitter sorrows of Europe will leave their clearest trace, perhaps, in some such curious way, and tragic Mah Jongg may be a children's game some day.

## *The Sound of the Zeitgeist*

THE supreme luxury of these post-war years, sweet and strong enough for the dullest palate of the sudden rich, that lets most other titbits of life pass unappreciated, is to listen to a new sound—the authentic voice of the age. To hear it in its various tones and moods, and so enjoy this pleasure of self-revelation and full communion with our generation, you need not harness your head with steel and hard rubber to listen to the wireless, nor loiter at the dangerous edges of a hunger crowd in Moscow or Berlin, though in these, too, our generation seems to speak. This voice is to be heard in comfort and security in the innermost hall of capital hotels—Ritz, Adlon, Savoy—in the chief cities of Europe. There in a cushioned wicker chair, at night or in late afternoon—if you are rich—you may hear the Saxophone: the *Zeitgeist* singing to itself.

This is the newest instrument, quite typical of our times. It was invented, years out of its time, by a half mythical Monsieur Sax, but had to wait for its opportunity for our half-beat syncopated music, our easy spending to pay its players, and most of all, for the peculiar temper of our times that it interprets. The nineteenth century had violins and pianos: we are

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tired of them, and of four years of drum and fife. We need a new sound; Marinetti's baby rattles and futurist whistles were too stupid and noisy for our nerves and intelligence. So some rummager re-found this Saxophone in the lumber-room of musical invention.

It is both pipe and horn; bell-mouthed, flexible—an ingenious bridge between wood and metal, that joins passionate organic and resonant inorganic together more cleverly than any other instrument. The men of the 1900 Grand Exposition, because of this, gave it a prize; but they could not endure its sound, which startled and displeased them. It did not belong to their times; it would not blend with their orchestras. Nor could anyone be found properly to play it. For though the fingering is hopelessly easy, this Saxophone needs tragic skill and energy, that wears out the heart and the lungs. The star Saxophonist lasts no more than three years. The caste is almost priestly, marked out by their salary and fate from any mere trombonists, or musicians less sincere.

I heard it for the first time in the lukewarm atmosphere of a great hotel; at the end of a hundred velvet yards of corridor and through draught-proof revolving doors, in a vast room prepared for tea. Hundreds of easy chairs were grouped round little tables, in encampment

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round a polished parquet, as sacredly empty as the nave of a church. In the sanctuary was a raised dais: growing out of palms, symbolical of luxury; on this two seated rows of musicians: in black evening coats, symbolical of elegance. The room was filled with tea-drinkers, of three categories: war rich, still uneasy; those who had won fortunes from the exchanges, more adventurous; and files of those sleek young men, who are not rich, but mean to be, whose life and ways in the meantime are so mysterious, and who form so characteristic a part of every gathering of the wealthy in Europe.

They are all quiet; for the new rich have no conversation, and their young inseparables use careful undertones for what they have to say. Italian waiters bring trays of sweet cakes and unctuous toast. The band begins softly, as if considerate for the general hush. The leader stands away from his chair, which he will not use while playing; for mimicry and grimaces are part of what he is paid for; and his audience expect that he should himself plainly feel the intoxication of his own music. He is a Dervish; an ecstatic; paid to whip this dull, hard crowd into an excitement they can feel. As he starts couples slide and slouch past on the empty floor; the inexplicable young men hold the wives of profiteers slackly, dutifully; and the band



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does not hurry them. The great Saxophonist slowly raises himself through pacing, ordered rhythms, deceptively serious, to the plane of emotion we are come to feel. In this beginning the Saxophone is an unusual, throbbing, rich vibration; nothing more; though with a savour of the savage in it, the pulse of war-drums in Africa, that we have grown used to since the war: almost banal. But there is no excitement left in it, it is purified of the naïve shouts and bangings that the first jazz negroes brought with them four years ago. It is steady, savage, serene, in place under this mock mother-of-pearl ceiling, this synthetic gold achievement of machine-made luxury, that is this artless magnificence of the hotel *de luxe*. They play Fox Trots, One Steps, Blues, dances of our time, that figure, I suppose, economy of effort, and have only the passion of a bodily tired man. The days of throaty waltzes, yearning Two Steps, eternally sentimentalising about love, are gone with violin orchestras, and no one believes in the banjo any more than they do in the harp. The dancers amuse themselves solemnly, wordlessly; the Saxophone gives them no ethics, and not caring if anything, even its adepts, survives another hour, continues its droning for some time.

But, perhaps by accumulation of this steady

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smooth massaging of the nerves, perhaps because, as the dance goes on he comes to less sober tunes, the Saxophonist climbs imperceptibly to a new step, the sliding becomes more jaunty. Then suddenly I hear the real note of the Saxophone, unforgettable, high and clear, as if from a heart of brass, the new thing, the thing we have come to hear. To me it has quite passed out of humanity, this famous upper register, but it is still near enough for me to understand; piercing musical, the cry of a faun that is beautiful and hurt. The leader tips his instrument into the air; he blows with all his force, but his cheeks remain pale. He is now at the height of his art. The voice of our age has come through his lips, through this marvellous instrument. He is a priest possessed with a half-human god, endlessly sorrowful, yet utterly unsentimental, incapable of regret, with no past, no memory, no future, no hope. The sound pricks the dancers, parts their lips, puts spring into their march. These unexpressive, unethical, unthinking men have discovered their unethical, unsentimental reaction to our age.

This is the thing that makes the Saxophone great, and brings fortunes and ruin to its players. But it is changeable and can feign many things. The music it plays is often woven round

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old tunes: plantation melodies of the early 'sixties, *S'wanee River*, *Oh Susanna*; old dances, and arias; even seventy-year-old hymns. The Saxophone mocks at them in its unconscious way, weaving them into the exact measure of its syncopation, like an old man who remembers, wonders at but never more feels, the fine emotions of his youth. But sometimes, for a moment, though these faun pipes play ever so well this prank, old associations float uppermost, and these tunes bring back to me more than is in the music. Then in spite of its nature, the Saxophone seems to brood, and almost regret the years that have brought it to favour, the war, the peace, and this state to which Europe through its own fault has come; and ghosts of broken promises and broken soldiers sadly look over the shoulders of the dancers. And every beat of the impeccable rhythm is heavy with the tread of the armies of Somme and Marne, or the heavy echo of the unarmed millions of Russians marching to Tannenberg. Then the Saxophone seems burdened with an illusory despair; other days before Europe was ruined rise up before this assembly of those who were not ruined.

But this mood is a fancy, and the Saxophone will not allow it long. It turns with a curve into *I Don't Care*, or *Let's Pretend*; not even

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regretting our regrets, absorbed in the present, that owes no debts either to the irretrievable past, or to the incomprehensible future. It strikes up *Rambler Rose*, the latest Fox Trot, the hangdog march past of our age. That is more to our taste, to us modern Europeans, that oppose to the dangers with which we are beleaguered, not fear, nor courage, only impassibility; and who have substituted for human aspiration that needs belief, this innocence of the faun behind the Saxophone. So, for the supreme expression of our hard, unreflective joys we have chosen this instrument. Our fathers left it uncomprehended; our children may shiver at it, and discard it again. For the present it makes audible the Spirit of our Age.

## *First Impressions of England*

AS to Dover, it amused us. Madame Dubois tittered at the ridiculously clean porters' uniforms, without knowing why. Her husband had convinced her for years that the English were a joke. At seven years old he heard Chocolat, the famous English clown at the Cirque Médrano, and ever since believed that the English were a gifted, comical race. They hardly missed a Sunday for years without watching the comedy of "Les Cook Touristes" on the Boulevard. So his theory that all the race of Chocolat were humorists grew strong. Before retiring, *fortune faite*, he brought her to see London, a last joke before the serious work of cabbage-planting began.

The train passed through acres of dolls' houses, with gardens, like window boxes dropped from the skies, as amusing and innocent as an old picture book. Even the girl in the corner, who was going to teach French and learn English, cheered up when she saw those English villages. We shared our sandwiches, and threw the paper out of the window. We joked about what the man who swept those miraculous fields would say, when he found three greasy scraps of the *Matin* in his grass next morning. But as the time passed the train

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plunged into grey smoke. The English passengers, who had been so pleasant to each other on the boat, even apologising when they pushed, changed; their looks turned stern and cruel as they neared their homes. The once-tipped waiters grew irritable. A foreboding that lasted till the end swung through the train.

The girl in the corner, now jokes about the English had stopped, remembered this and that, and read the letters in her handbag over again and again.

So London swooped upon us with troops of porters, hard and calm, and legions of taxicabs. The old red *tacots* of the Gare du Nord are wheelbarrows beside these English cabs. One took us into the labyrinthical city.

It was a bakers' evening—as if the streets were smouldering. The air smells of soot; but for the undertang of tar it would be sickening. Everything is smudged with coal, the seats, the handles, the money, the sky. Down Victoria Street we slipped between cliffs of black stone, volcanic, all quarried into windows. The homely roar of Paris traffic was here replaced by a languishing, whispering rustle over the asphalt. Crowds walk past quickly, heads bent forward in a hurry. Slow 'buses drifted past us, balancing their top-deck crews. Their



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drivers wear a white coat, and sit behind a scarlet throne.

Down Piccadilly huge glass windows, behind which tiny men move and settle, like rare fishes in an aquarium. There are only two colours anywhere against the black: red and yellow. Everything is splashed with one or other; soldiers wear the one, and carry the other on the tips of their canes; shop-windows are tricked out in both; 'buses have that livery, and here and there, like symbolic pillars, there are post-boxes the colour of arterial blood. London seems in bright commemoration for a butchery.

This is great London, we thought, step-mother of orphans, killer of strangers, the last citadel of unjust riches, where, alone in the world to-day, the rich are fearless and the poor afraid. This is the last trench of the old order, and the enemy of the new, where possession is secure, and no art, no knowledge except the making of money and inheritance. Stony city, implacable city, lonely city withdrawn from all growth, enemy of the spirit, dangerous and cruel city, squatting over treasure out of sight of the sun. This is the city that starved its poets and ruined its artists, the stronghold of feudal merchants and merchant lords: that shall stand for ever.

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The passers walk hard under the lights. They clamp their lips close to get where they are going as fast as they may. Our cab is going slower and slower; we can hear everything, but no one is talking. There is no human sound in the streets. No chattering, no laughter, all arms palsied. An awe is on us. We are lost in a strange world. My couple smile no more; they are quiet, and stare and hold hands.

But when the street gulf let us see Trafalgar Square, remote and beautiful, and Nelson like a phantom in the air, above a lake of street lights, in hot dusk, and the huge shadows of buildings standing freely around, apart, like peaks flying their flags, then we forgot the rest.

London seemed to us like a holy city, burning with a slow fire, with cherubim and seraphim standing on every rooftop, awful and serene. Behind this wonder the sky was calm and pure. We turned and told each other without disappointment that this was London, this comic, cruel, heavenly place.

## *Sunday Night*

THAT perilous wood they warned me against, Hyde Park, where every tree is a double ambush after dusk, for police and pests, is safe on Sunday nights. Then aged rectors and Privy Councillors, and all the ranks of English innocence may venture in, as I did; inspect its wickedest side paths, saunter past its thickets, and even sit alone there on a public bench. All social dangers spend Sunday out of town. Cocaine, like braces, is not for sale on the Sabbath; blackmailers have gone fishing; and harpies, male and female, have flown to some suburban woods. On Sunday all London that is good enjoys an ordered day. That morning they have slept, or gone to church, or read the week's disasters in the *News of the World*; that afternoon, there are more pleasures: some push perambulators in other, far-off parks, or past dumped landscapes of coal and iron, under the slant of super-cranes. Or they court their sweethearts by unshaded canals, or in retired ground behind gasometers. Others have helped children to chalk mazes for hop-scotch in streets that the 'bus routes have left free. Most and simplest are they who wait for the legal hour of opening, propped at a corner. The pleasures of an industrial

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civilisation are given up to us, and we have a whole day for them. And to crown our Sunday, if still unsatisfied, there are open-air meetings at Hyde Park, at the Marble Arch.

So I walked through the dangerous park, and came to the north end. We were thousands at this moot. The summer evening was aromatic with smoke from tobacco, imported from Virginia, Egypt, and the East; in every way of burning. Poor and rich, from Bethnal Green, and from the select streets where each house is fenced off with spear-head railings, all chased here by an unbearable and loathsome boredom. The space was hedged on the Oxford Street side, by seven stories of lighted windows, that faintly illuminated it; in its centre was a blue-glare arc lamp, like a captive planet, impaled on an iron standard. Past the arch, glittering 'buses clucked and rattled: their heavier sounds drowned by the open-air singing. The crowd is in continual commotion; circling round the group like a congress of moths under the trees. Each in a restless effort to find the magic that his soul desires, drifts into orbit after orbit; shares for a moment in its occupations, then pulls himself free; until at last he finds his goal, and comes to a stand, eyes absent, chewing his pipe-stem, swaying gently as he takes in his comforting. For here is black magic, with in-

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cantations, as few civilised folk have retained it; the enchantments of the supernatural and rhythm and spell. Each group has its difference in ritual and theory. Along the fences are the unplanned booths of the lesser witch doctors, who comfort without music; promising ease of heart and relief from the weight of Sundays for ever, if only you believe. Under a Swiss carved crucifix, a woman, with disfiguring spectacles and a palate of brass, is offering a large circumference of heads "the Cartholic Church"; two yards away on a sagging platform, another sorcerer, with a dark, lascar look, with none of her pretensions to breeding, is suggesting "The Church of the Oath, of the Everlasting Covenant." Few followers to him. A city gentleman with the practised smooth gestures of a hypnotist is conjuring his hearers with "Peace, Eternal Peace. And Joy, Joy." But the crowd, in the main, only sips at these potions: a spoonful of verbs, the tag-end of an anecdote, and it has gone elsewhere, pulled by the stronger witchcraft of the hymn-singers. These are formed in circles packed to the limits of their own sound. In one, there is a choir surrounded, of thin men and stoutish women, led by a human wisp, with one white glove. They chant together:

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Shall we gather at the River?  
The beautiful, the beautiful, the River.

Slow, erotic stuff, with a beat in it. Their out-skirts join in, lagging on the rhythm, as if they were holding its arm. These, with the next group, whose conflicting measure wanders across to us confusingly, when we breathe between the lines:

No more parting, no more sorrow,  
No . . . More . . . Tears.

Here is something which satisfies. No one who has tangled himself in their group may go away until he has drunk deep of melancholies. The singers seem rapt: with what unfathomable, reserved sorrows, that only this can ease: nostalgia for the grave; the stranger may guess, but cannot know. This is an inward secret of the masters of the world, the English people; who have conquered half the earth, yet when they are alone, in their principal city, have griefs at heart that only this can assuage. This is part of the price they have paid. They are homesick for Heaven, for golden gates, and forgiveness, and reunion and dark rivers. What can this people know of exile? Yet farther off come gusts of another tune:

Heaven, Heaven, Heaven is my home.



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This once comforted homesick slaves on the plantations. The light at this angle leaves the women's faces in deep shadow, under their hat rims, except their chins; they stand very stolidly interested. The men close their eyes, croon to themselves without shame. Whatever woes they have, these English, they conjure them with the old charms. Soft-stepping Hindoos, spotless Blacks, are here to-night: they circumnavigate the groups uncomprehendingly. Under a cresset, outside the range of singers, an old grey man is shouting "the Oly Ghost" very loud; but no one listens to him; he is as indifferent, and goes on preaching to the air. And beyond on the field paths the music merges in the sound of boots on gravel; the crowd straggles away. Spaced lamps make gussets of amber in the night; under them couples on the benches sit for hours, lip to lip, quite motionless. Passing girls giggle over soldier secrets; the mateless track them with stare and cough. On the grass are black packages of shadows here and there, under the moon. London is finishing her Sunday.

## *Cruelty*

THE English, in their pride, keep their secrets closer than any other race. Their hidden cults have no carved gateways to catch curiosity; no heavy curtains, nor poisoned traps; no guard priests, no passwords. Instead, this people set up their most mysterious temples on the public way, cut them squat and square to size with the houses next door, and, for the rest, keep from talking or writing about them. As a last disguise, they sometimes hook up the sign *No Smoking* outside, and charge a small price for admission.

That sign betrayed Madame Tussaud's to me one wet afternoon. I am no raw traveller, and know well that when that sign is hung out in England something queer is to be seen. But for its chance (so well was the masquerade done) I might have missed one of the strangest, the most curious sights in Europe.

Inside, a Band was steaming crowded benches of families with warm, moist music. Round them slow-marched carefully, three deep visitors, mixed with wax policemen, wax provincials, wax nurses; the living so like the wax in silence, composure and restraint, and the wax so near to life, that they all seemed equally bewildered. Without paying any

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attention to their surrounding neighbours, as if tired of the puzzle of sorting wooden living from waxen dead, the benches in the centre sat and sat, occasionally rustling their paper bags genteelly and using their jaws. Through cracks in the moving wall scarlet splashes of uniforms and glints of paste diamonds opened and disappeared. These were figures of kings and celebrities, which the spectators recognised, in their order, with nods of the head, or (if the personage was foreign) with fumblings at their catalogues. All was done without much talk, as if the dummies at their elbows had set the crowd a model of behaviour.

This was queer, but I felt there was more behind. There was an after-service air about this crowd that could not be mistaken, that told me they were decorously ending some greater rite, which somewhere in this place had gone before. I searched for it, and found after reflection that the currents of their motion, most confused round about the Band, a little further to the left set in two directions: one feeding the slow-marchers, the other draining them irresistibly towards a narrow wicket which, as I got near, I saw led to a deep staircase of stone. I steered myself out of the slow whirlpool without effort, and was borne to the entrance of the Chamber of Horrors, in the midst of a

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flotsam of middle-aged women, young men, girls, and children. Wedged against me down the steps, were two pale young women, with books in a strap. At the bottom was an iron grill of spikes covering the arch; and here the taller said to her sister, "Do let us, please, see everything." The air suddenly chilled; the London smell of peppermint and soft-coal soot, which was so strong in the Great Hall of Music, rarefied and cleared. Another scent came to reinforce it—of musty clothes, wet umbrellas, mould. There began a lobby where little boxes like altars were ranged; in them wax figures with numbers, which my neighbours picked out of the catalogues audibly. First a man with a long face like a horse. The tall, pale girl said "Smith, the Brides in the Bath." A man with frightened, bulging eyes. "Crippen," she said, significantly pointing her thumb. I was pushed away from them in the current, past side-chapels hollowed into the stone, where red lamps were burning, where groups of spectators stood rapt in their thoughts as if before shrines, to a central room, where a great dock was raised. It was "Guaranteed from Old Bailey," thick immovable timber, all scratched on the hand shelf with fingers or thumbs of those sentenced to death. Behind them, ranged rank by rank, elbow pressing,

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were scores of firm-lipped men and women, in shabby clothing (guaranteed also), with staring eyes; like the assembly of devils in an Eastern sanctuary. We gazed at them a long while; everyone about me seemed loosened in their mind by the sight; strangers spoke quietly and enjoyably, finding the names in each other's catalogues. Over the walls were hanging twisted gratings of iron, with points for tearing and flat pieces for pressing, hieroglyphs of agony, bought at a great price from the Turk, and out of English History. Age had turned the cheap clothing of the figures brown like dried blood; their hands were discoloured, and the modeller had left some of their nails unfinished. We went over them button by button; on the sides of the dock were hung faded photographs, glazed letters asking for mercy, or instructing solicitors, or acknowledging some sale: Mrs. Pearcy; Mrs. Dyer; Rush; Milsom and Fowler: names in awkward unformed writing, in brown ink the colour of their coats. At one end was the woman who had lately been hanged, swarthy, thick-lipped, straightening her lips after a smile, next to her paramour. The spectators returned again and again to her, looking at her, all the lines round their mouths smoothed away by the emotion of the sight.

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Then, to the holy of holies, the secret place above all others, the shrine of ultimate cruelty and state-killing; with the long, strong beam of oak, the thick hemp rope knotted to its middle, and the group. A wax policeman fixed his glass eyes on a rack a wall away, imitating its rectangular, implacable rigidity in his pose. On a chair sat the victim, a miserable old man, in a lifelike manner; mouth awry, eyes cast down to the floor that was to open and end him; at his side, broad-waistcoated, fluff-whiskered Calcraft, keeping back his beef and beer joviality in the solemnity of the moment, with one fat, rosy waxen, unfinished hand on the shoulder of old Charles Peace. "The Gallows, you see," said that girl again. I looked aside at her. She had colour now in her cheeks, her lips have puffed out; her mouth a little parted. Her eyes were very bright.

They all look the same in that cellar after they have seen Charles Peace grimacing under the rope. Cruelty is the oldest of tonics. There is nothing violent, almost nothing vicious, about this gloating: it is English cruelty, sober, respectable, queer, the cruelty of strangling, not of cutting or mess. We still hang women and beat men with the cat o' nine tails—inexplicable English nature; unfathomable problem for the rest of humanity; as if the

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English soul, too, was separated by a sea channel. Pity mixes with the stronger emotion in this mixed crowd of all ages, from all parts of the island. Some spiced meats need sweet sauces. But everyone feels it, tastes it; turns it under the tongue and against the palate. Children, leaving their mothers' skirts for a moment, clutch the ropes that surround the great Peace, smile contentedly, slowly showing their pretty teeth. No mistaking who is alive here, who dead, now; they have all put off their reserve; those pale sisters have become beautiful in this lair. They frightened me more than the mock-horrors of the place, more than the stale air of bad past things, more than the swollen-throated mask of Mrs. Manning, near my hand, more even than the framed letters sixty years old, where murderesses asked for a respite. Here was an inexplicable thing; a deep part of the inexplicable character of the English race: this hole-in-the-corner rite of the middle classes. The joking judges, the condemned men who join in the laugh; the good-natured, stone-hard, majestic, grotesque English law. Old as that is, there is something more archaic behind it. Cruelty. That devil uses many disguises, and changes of shape and figure to hide himself away. Stake, bonfire; and the subtleties of the Chinese; the grimac-



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ing torments of the black; those slow dissections, stretchings, torsions; impalings, scaldings; roastings, slashings, piercings; flayings, breakings, borings: all the arsenal of hell, which is shown in picture round these walls, has nothing more ugly than this hanging, this discreet throttling in a shed, which these good people taste by proxy. Old Cruelty has put off his mad feathers, and wears a shabby suit of broadcloth; has drawn on mended gloves to hide his hands. He has washed the paint off his face, and composed his features to a round and cheerful look. He has laid aside pretensions to be long, and crowds all his nausea into one brief minute of fumbling with the neck. He has turned decent and unbloody, and pays an entertainment tax. I saw this in the cellar off the Marylebone Road; jolly, quite at ease, a family party cruelty, perhaps an essential element of strength, after all, and one of the props of the British Empire (most things in England are): made into an official rite, with munching and bands and eatables.

In that place, smelling of mould and peppermint, amid crude memorials of violent death, those peaceful civilised folk were enjoying primitive emotions; the exquisite joys of cruelty and pain.

## *The Mob Crowns the Ape*

THE Paris Mob is the most ancient, powerful thing in France. It grew up, before our days, in the vast squares and open places of the city. With the coming of machinery to make mankind more numerous and anonymous, it has lost something of the energy that smashed the Bastille; but it is closer together. The Paris Mob, when it is lit up, is a hideous beast, bigger than Leviathan, or Behemoth; when it sleeps, it is slow and strong and mild. The separate human beings who make up its bulk do everything alike. They think, hate, love, live; eat together. Especially do they seek their amusement together. The Mob chooses its instruments of pleasure tyrannically. It makes its amusers, and breaks them; sets them up on golden thrones, and hurls them in the muck. The Monster gambolled in its strength last Sunday. It is grown so big, that it can only understand sights. No voice, no instrument of sound can carry to its borders, and tickle them with pleasure. Only the universality of light is big enough for its enjoyments. It is deaf, but million eyed. Gladiators and dancers; footballers; bullfighters; pugilists are the only delights of this Leviathan. The fight was at the Stade Montrouge, the region where the Mob

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lives. The Stade is a makeshift temple of perishable steel and wood; so wide that it cannot be roofed. The Mob's King-Favourite, Carpentier, chose this building to show himself to his subject beast, because of its size. If there was a ring in Paris as high as the Eiffel Tower, and as broad as the Place de la Concorde, they would have staged the fight there. Those other great ministers of Mob, the cinema people, made Carpentier fight Siki, because they thought his hold was weakening. No money in it indeed to one who has fingered American dollars. But Carpentier agreed to a tiresome afternoon. The Cinema lords all his hopes and vanities nowadays. But angrily; he made the Mob pay for it. Descamps, his chancellor, saw to that. There were a regiment of ticket checkers: Descamps tried to make even these pay for their fun, like the rest. He has the brain; he is as close as the Champion himself. The Mob was summoned to its treat by its newspapers. It obeyed placidly. Five hours before the spectacle it began to move into the Stade. At midday it was packed arm to arm, cheek to cheek, inside.

The voice of the Monster is greater than any orchestra. While it waits, for food or play, there is a nameless, monotonous murmur, with the sea in it. Smaller crowds produce only a

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babble: but Leviathan himself, when he is come in uncouth multitude, speaks in a musical note; grander, more profound than any in the gamut, but single, intelligible. The skilled priests of this Mob kept it waiting until four o'clock with minor sights, which lulled it to quiet. A haze went up from it, of grey tobacco smoke; it rustled gently its greasy papers; it smelled of eatables and beer. Then as the fixed hour passed, the grave, wave note sharpened a tone, lifted itself up, and its hundred thousand limbs stirred fretfully. The Mob was waiting. Appetite was pricking. The tiny servants of its passions bestirred themselves, ran to and fro. And in the centre appeared the Black Ape; he that was to be sacrificed. Mob greeted him with a bellow, "Iya, Iya"; like the challenge of a bull.

In the midst of these shores of humanity, cobbled with heads and pale, noseless faces, all eyes; they had set up a dirty yellow altar: the Ring. Siki, the negro, was jostled into it by his handful of midget helpers, in grey sweaters. He is blood cousin to the orang-outang, this African Senegalese: anthropoid in his hang-dog shoulders; near the beginnings in his mind. He heard that swell with the same awe that his ancestors listened to the trumpeting of a prehistoric horror in the forest outside their huts.

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This Monster was friendly, playful: but Siki, in his corner, hung his head. The deaf Mob laughed at him with unidentifiable vowels; encouraged him with its only speech. He did not lift his eyes.

The other, the King-Favourite, kept him waiting, with intentional cruelty. The negro felt the injustice; it frightened him still more. Ten minutes passed. The great man and his friends come down an alley. Carpentier is a tall, pasty-faced fellow; good-looking in a coarse way, with an indolent, expressive chin, and eyes dulled with good living. Great Mob made him; covered him with gold and admiration: he is one of its own, coal miner turned fop: too rich, too proud, too theatrical. He is superbly conscious of his fame. His party have come to see another triumph. The tallest is a young old man, with a nose like the claw of an ostrich, which has pushed his chin into his collar; owner of a Mob newspaper, international gaming houses—and other things. The pugilist walks like a peacock; throwing his hands to the crowd with nonchalance. He wears a grey silk dressing-gown, spotted with grease and dried sweat; his hair is oiled back from his forehead; he shows his teeth. Beside him trots a little actress, huge hatted: another idol and slave of the Mob, who lifted her from

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the Grenelle gutter for her loose tongue and enormous toothy smile. Her husband, dressed for the part of millionaire, edges after her; then Descamps, nervous, eyebrowed: ex-circus clown, who rides his champion to victory after victory. Trainer and Champion hate each other: Deschamps has the wits; there are stories between them; yet each prizes the other like a mascot.

The Mob by stages sees its chosen has appeared; and makes the girders tremble in greeting. The anachronistic ritual of a fight begins: the great man stands and makes the movements of shaking hands, inside the ring. Men in shirt sleeves compare watches. Up aloft, there is a battery of single-eyed cinema cameras, that volley down like Maxims. The altar is prepared. The sacrifice is ready. The Mob is like a windless sea. A gong bangs.

The black man steps out, lower lip pulled in by fear. He holds his arms branched out, as if to ward off the white man's rage. With one of the abrupt changes the Monster uses, there starts a roar, palateless, heavy; as loud as a bursting reservoir. It breaks over that lonely pair. The white seems gone drunk. It has gone to his head; he is possessed with the intoxication of pride. All his gestures are unruly, he brags with his gloves, with movements of his

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hips; he makes signs to the sky like a comic actor, mumshowing his only fear is that it shall rain: he pretends to hit, and misses. A cackle starts from his ringside friends; the thousands imitate them with their lips; then laugh. The Mob laughs, "O, O."

The black seems like a cricket in a cage; he sweats with fear, stumbles at the other; falls flat. Like fire, their master passes from crackling merriment to rage. It has not come to see this dance of mockery, it needs blood and death. Almost in time to catch the echo of its laughter under the beams, it yells. A clear, intense note, mounting three steps from the first, like the clap of a falling house. Each man heard his neighbour scream, "Cinema, Cinema," but the sound of the whole had no meaning but "*Mort.*" A hand flickers over a gong inaudibly; the two part, and go to their corners. Descamps and Carpentier talk together; the trainer waves his hands, wrinkles his mouth, warns. The other, shrugging.

At the end of the next act, the great voice has split and hoarsened. There is no more a single note; only a rhythmic, throbbing pulse of disappointment and protest: that maddens the favourite. He hews raggedly, angrily at the black body. Siki stoops so low that he must fall. The white towers over him, like a priest



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flaying a sacrificial animal; torturing it before he kills. There is another pause.

The Champion, in his corner: he jerks his head at the little man who is waving a towel in his face, as if he would spit back at him. He stares at the grumbling monster as if he would flog it into respect. Then, with the same jutting jerk of the chin, he leaps to meet the victim and destroy him. All noise falls away. A tremendous hook takes the negro sideways on the jaw, and it sounds as small and pitiful as the noise of chopping wood. The black falls; gets up; is smashed again. The white stands over him exultant.

Then, without waiting, as if the ground repelled him, the black rebounds. Stung out of his reverence, arms whirling, he catches Carpentier full face with his black fist. Blood spurts on the pale cheek, down from the eye, trickles into his mouth. He totters, and falls.

Then, picking up quickly from a silence in which I heard a drawling voice counting very slow; there is a sound, sudden, awful as the snapping of an immense beam. The blow, the voice and the thunder follow each other in perfect time. Carpentier tilts himself up. The black shivers; then he is upon him, amuck; crazy with past fear and hate for the white beast before him.

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In confusion, the face of things is changed. Siki is no more humble slave, waiting for the knife: he is no more even Man. In a lycanthropic change, he has become an animal in a fit. His mouth slavers; the white of his eyes has changed colour, his face is a vile muzzle. The other plunges at this apparition; foins at it in agony; goes down; rises; jumps his skull into the black face. Siki snaps his jaws in pain at the foul blow. The two no longer dance slowly round the square; the black and the white whirl together like two gales. The Mob is thudding out its hysteria and its joy. Carpentier's face is broken; marred; his eyes are puffed and half shut like a man dying of plague. The gloves are purple, shapeless bundles. He falls; lurches to his feet. Siki seems to hold out a hand. Carpentier pushes against him weakly.

Then what was preparing since these thousands had come together to surrender their wills to a greater organism than themselves, out of which it was made, came to pass. The Mob spirit was of a sudden full grown, unified, living, personal: a Beast. It opened its mighty throat and gave one yell—"EIEI." The volume of its sound was tangible. And, in the fog of smoke, that blurred the details of the ring, with that call in the ears, it seemed that from its bulk, or the stuff of its primitive, brutish soul,

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something material, a shadow escaped, pushed between the boxers and the sun. It sprawled over the white in indistinct blur, as if it were gripping him, impotent, condemned, while the apeman, back in his frenzy, smashed him. With his face no more human than the bark of a tree, gasping, plunging, drowning under the shadow of that hand, under those blows, I saw the white man tripped, flung heavily at last, twitching his foot violently from the knees in a final effort to rise. Then lie still.

A midget with a watch, lifted up his hand, gave a verdict. Then the numberless affronts the Mob had suffered from its beaten lord, stirred in its new-born brutish mind; its will to be free for ever; to batter like the black, to imitate his whirling arms; to hammer in the face of its enemies, to kill them out; gathered and swelled to a cry, which grew and magnified, till it became an "Ut, Ut," that turned the blood to water, and made one sick of humanity. There were no more separate persons in that great Stadium: only a shambling, unnatural Monster, which was screaming its passion to be alive; and worshipping a new master after its heart. The Mob has chosen. It has put down, and raised up. A new idol of its own breed shall take up his reign. Lest worse betide, the old one in haste is hoisted on the shoulders of his

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friends, a merciful cloth over his face to hide it from the sun, from human eyes, most of all from the Mob Monster, lest it see him again and tear him in pieces and mash them into mud beneath its boots.

But it does not see him any more; for already its countless eyes are hazy and wandering, its attention distracted. As if tired by its frantical emotions, its atoms are disjoining: its unit personality of force after so brief a life, already starts to split. Dissolution has set in; groups pull off from its loosening bulk, regain simple humanity. And the Monster, struggling half-wittedly against its end, roars confusedly, and in vain. Its voice, now that its brief time is finishing, is thick and broken; it has lost all resonance and pitch, flags to a sort of sobbing, then to a mere mutter of thousands of separate beings, mixed with the shuffling of their feet to the doors. Siki is carried shoulder high; a chorus of tiny hisses, cheers, laughs; but the active life of the Mob has faded back into the recesses of the individual souls out of which it had issued.

The sacrifice is over.

## *Old Man Bender's Orchard*

**I**N the Kansas papers on June 18th, 1872, the following advertisement appeared:

Professor Miss Kate Bender can heal disease, cure blindness, fits and deafness. Residence, 14 miles east of Independence, on the road to Osage Mission.

Behind it lay a story like those which still make the peasants of remote corners in Europe shiver as they sit round the fire. The sting of folklore, of witches, cannibals, evil innkeepers, and werewolves is somewhat dulled by intervening centuries. The story of the Benders is comparatively brand new, and the details are not blurred by generations of oral transmitters, but preserved on ice in matter-of-fact police records. Kate Bender was a rectangular, red-faced woman of twenty-four. Her father, Old Man Bender, and her brother were "large, coarse-appearing men." Her mother was a masculine, savage creature who, although sixty years old, could still do the work of a horse. They were a family of northern primitives, out of place where law and order were settled, pre-civilised, properly belonging to some age before man gave up the right to kill.

They lived off the beaten track, eighteen miles from the boundary of Kansas State, in a

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ramshackle frame-house, with a small half-acre orchard behind it. In the front of the house was a room where meals were served to wayfarers. The whole family had truck with ghosts and spirits, and neighbours, seeking a modern name for what with the Benders was a thing as old as savagery, called them "Spiritualists." Miss Kate was the youngest, and the leader of the family. They were naturally not popular, and no one of the surrounding district would have stayed a night in the Benders' Tavern for a fortune. The few who passed the remote shanty late at night had tales of the evil sounds that came from the inn. The place was so far from the beaten track, however, that rumour did not occupy itself often with the Benders. People had something more to do in Kansas in those days than to go worrying about a ghost-ridden family like the Benders.

Apparently the advertisement did not attract many to the inn. The journey was long and difficult, and it is not recorded that more than two or three sufferers came to try the supernatural powers of Professor Kate. Occasionally a stray voyager ate a meal there, but most, when asked, referred to the forbidding ways of the family, their habits of peeping and mutter-

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ing together, and the surliness which seemed to possess the whole family.

In 1873, in the spring, Doctor William York left Fort Scott on horseback, on his way back to his home in Independence, Kansas, and disappeared. He was rich, and the leader of the little community where he lived. His family and the citizens, knowing his cheerful disposition, were certain that he had not committed suicide, and feared foul play. Search parties were sent out for him without any result. His brother happened to be a Senator, and spared no expense in hiring detectives, who scoured the whole country. In the course of their wanderings they came to the township of Cherryvale, five miles from the Benders' tavern, where they had news of the doctor.

At Cherryvale most maintained that the doctor had likely fallen in with border bandits and come to some misfortune. No suspicion seems to have fallen on the Benders; the visit a party of mounted men made to the tavern seems to have been intended simply to ask if the family had seen the doctor pass. To their surprise, however, when they rode up to the door, there was no sign of life. The Benders seemed to be away, all the windows were shuttered. This party rode on, but another, some days later on the same road, was curious enough to go round



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to the back of the house to see what was to be seen. There a most curious and ill-omened sight met them. In a little paddock at the back were the dead bodies of several calves and hogs, dead of thirst and hunger. Before the Benders could have let this happen something strange indeed must have occurred. It is hard for townspeople to understand the instinctive care which peasants give to their stock—at once their capital and their livelihood. The Benders must have left not only for a grave reason, a reason of life and death, but in a most inexplicable hurry, not to have stopped to take down the fence-gate and give the beasts a chance for their lives.

With foreboding the party made further search, though still not daring to break door or window to enter the deserted house. It had been raining hard. In the small orchard they noticed that in a certain place the ground had settled very noticeably, and that the depression was in the form of a grave. They set to work and dug up the badly decomposed body of Doctor York. The skull had been crushed and the throat cut in a peculiar manner, somewhat, it was later discovered, as animals are slaughtered in certain rituals.

Before nightfall seven other bodies were exhumed, and some were later identified as fol-

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lows: a horse-dealer, a lawyer, a tramp, an immigrant and his infant daughter. In each case the skull was battered to a pulp and the throat cut from ear to ear; the little girl bore no marks of violence, and appeared to have been thrown, living, into her father's grave. The next day another girl's body was found, with long yellow hair. She had apparently been about eight years old. She had been butchered with extreme violence, and her bones were nearly all crushed. Later other bodies were found but not identified.

The officers then entered the house by force. They were met with an overpowering stench. It was easy to see how the crimes had been committed. A little booth was formed by an American cloth screen or partition, in which a bench and rough table were set. Here the wayfarers took their meals. The table was set so near the partition that the guest was forced to lean his head against the cloth and so allow the shape and position of it to be seen from behind. The brother or the father would then creep up with a stonemason's hammer (also found in the house) and slay. In the middle of the floor was a trapdoor and a great hole from which the smell came. This was opened, and found drenched with congealed blood. Bodies were thrown into this after their throats had been

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cut—with what strange rites and observances only the Benders could have revealed.

This they never did. Their fate is mysterious. The waggon in which they fled was tracked miles into the waste lands, and at last found, but empty. The hood was riddled with bullet holes, and splashes of blood were everywhere, but no trace of the family. While the detectives were searching for them, the crowd back in Cherryvale was doing ugly things, in its frenzy. They had caught a Mr. Brockmann, at one time a partner of Old Man Bender. As both were Germans, and once close friends, the crowd took him to the woods; there attempted to make him reveal the whereabouts of the horrible family. This he was unable to do. At any rate he was hanged and revived three times, and then allowed to go away. He is said eventually to have recovered.

A letter, received by a criminological investigator some years back in San Francisco, seems to throw as much light on the fate of the family as will ever appear. It runs.

Cherryvale, Kansas,

1910.

Dear Sir,—Yours received. It so happened that my father-in-law's farm joins that of the Benders and he helped to locate the bodies of the victims. I often tried to find out from him what became of the Benders, but he

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only gave me a knowing look and said he guessed they would not bother anyone else. There was a vigilance committee organised to locate the Benders, and shortly afterwards old man Bender's waggon was found by the roadside riddled with bullets. You will have to guess the rest.—I am, respectfully yours,

J. Kramer, Chief of Police.

The mystery of their death remains. It is easier to unravel than that of their precipitate flight. They were under no suspicion, and their precautions were such that no trace, had they remained, would ever have been found of their victims. Why did they kill? Sometimes, but not always, for money, for one or two of the bodies were tramps with nothing to give for the trouble of their slaying. The strange cuts in the throats of some of their victims were perhaps only a refinement of cruelty. Was it the Ghosts that drove the Benders away, leading to their discovery and ruin? The family were fervent, real believers in their own powers of evoking the dead. In that lonely house, with that smell, with those memories and the thought of what lay in the orchard, life must have been difficult for even the nerves of the Benders. Enigmatic, disquieting, primitive people—reminders that the race of ogres, witches, or traps for the unwary traveller, or pure wickedness, are not over. Europe in the

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'seventies, as perhaps it is to-day, was throwing up its depths; remote corners, never touched by the quick race of civilisation, in moals or nature, were being rediscovered, to the amazement of humanity, as the sudden droughts may reveal the bed of a river. Some day a greater than Gibbon will write the sociological history of the United States after the Civil War, in the Middle and Far West. Traces of European savages like the Benders, no doubt, appear from time to time in Europe. But the gigantic experiment of shipping the "backwoodsmen" of an old continent to a new virgin country, where they are freed suddenly from the repression of multiple authority, where everything still has to be organised and created, is something which strikes some imaginations as much as the long death-throes of an empire.

## *The Flight of the Emperor Khai Dinh*

THE Emperor of Annam, the King of Camboge, the Sultan of Morocco, and the Bey of Tunis are the four Kings of the French colonial pack. It is the policy to keep them in their own countries. The first exception was made for Sisowath of Camboge, who likes life, and pleaded so hard to come to Paris to see if the French books were exaggerating, that the Government relented. No harm came of that. The North African potentates on past occasions have been stalled off with a gramophone, or in our more enlightened days with a forty horsepower, for on principle it was felt that, like all edifices of remarkable size, French prestige is best appreciated at a distance. The only king who never showed any awkward desire to visit the capital of his protectors was the Gnostic Emperor of Annam, Khai Dinh, Epicurean hermit and poet. His ancestor had sent tribute of "elephants and sweet-scented wood" to Kublai Khan, almost without being asked, for the sake of peace and quietness. Khai Dinh still lives as pacific, super-civilised emperors did in the days of the Arabian Nights. If you have not seen the photographs of his apartments which French colonial propaganda has published, you must

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imagine the lacquered ancient glories amid which this still young man lives, as his countless ancestors lived, by learning and in extremity of refinement, making sensuality almost a virtue. Barbarous invasions have been allowed to pass over the heads of the dynasty of Kuang Ping, for these have long emancipated themselves from the brutality of even self-protection. Khai Dinh had never given his protectors and regents any trouble. Many of them wondered if he knew they were there at all. He lived occupied with illuminated Chinese books and concubines more numerous and more desirable than the beauties of Solomon.

Now, last year, the Marseilles Progressives decided on a *gr-randiose* colonial Exposition in their city. The men from Marseilles do what they will in France, by their self-confidence, their bright-eyed energy, and their dexterity. They had their Exposition. The people of Marseilles were out to impress the rest of France, which detests them as much as they despise Paris. Among many other marvels of expense and organisation, they built a replica of the celebrated Pagoda of Ankhkôr, the glory of Indo-China, in the middle of their Zoological Gardens on the hill overlooking the bay. France flocked to see it, and admitted that for once the Marseillais had not boasted over much.



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Pricked by the sincerity of this admiration, the organisers decided that they would put up a coping-stone. The Emperor of Annam himself, whom no one but the Regent Governor had ever seen, except from afar, should be fetched to grace their Exposition and admire the works of his own country, tastefully displayed. And as a last stroke of imaginative genius, the sacred Ballet of Courtesans, which even Marshal Joffre had only seen in part, must be bodily transplanted to dance before the "entry-payers" of the greatest Exposition ever imagined.

The power of the Marseilles Chamber of Commerce is limited entirely by the imagination of its members. The Colonial Office in Paris wasted no time in argument; cables were dispatched, and the duty fell to the Regent Governor to tell the Emperor Khai Dinh that Marseilles required his presence. No one knows what he said. What would the Dalai Lama say if he were ordered to the White City? One murky morning this detestable summer, Khai Dinh with his suite, came down the gangway to be greeted by M. Sarraut, Minister of Colonies. The Serene Monarch, in his marvellous silk tunic, and M. Sarraut, in fitless morning coat, were cinemaed side by side.

From the Exposition the party went on to

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Paris. The Emperor was taciturn, and gave his interpreter no work. A programme had been arranged. He was led through the grand tour of official France—his own fault, no doubt, for discreet inquiries whether he would prefer a space of the incognito life which various European monarchs have found preferable drew no answer. M. Sarraut equipped him with an official cook, and the Press announced that Khai Dinh found his chef, though far from a *cordon bleu*, so good that he had renounced his native diet. He went to dinner with M. Millerand and remained mute throughout, though to Western philosophers with a knowledge of contemporary history M. Millerand is one of the most interesting of Presidents. He was taken to the General Review on July 14th and met Marshal Foch, with the same impassivity, for Annamite emperors gave up admiration for war and soldiers centuries ago.

To one who feels like this, Dempsey would be more interesting than the little Marshal, who has no general conversation. State banquets found the Emperor beside the mournful and forbidding Poincaré, who neither amused Khai Dinh, nor was amused. Academicians—jealous Masson, and Bergson, more interested now in success than in the *élan vital*—all the flock of unknown immortals, eternally passing the paper

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money of elegant conversation—really there was nothing here to console an Epicurean Emperor for his palaces. If Anatole France had come, resolved to give over teasing and posing, Khai Dinh might have looked up from his plate. But the Emperor was baffling.

A last trick was played to impress and interest him. He was taken into the country, where a real Duchess, one of the greatest who had rallied to the Republic, of indisputable noblesse and riches, organised a grand reception. Paris held its breath at the description of the old-time magnificence of the ceremonies. Forty lackeys in wigs formed a double file with torches to welcome the Emperor. Even this dart into the civilised past did not relax the strained smile of the young Emperor, or bring more than the phrase of admiration which his interpreter had successfully pronounced at the Review, at the Banquet, at the Intellectual Evening spent in converse with the Academicians. It was whispered that the Emperor was behaving like a marooned sailor among Esquimaux, afraid to offend, but unable entirely to conceal his aversion for the savage games, the rude igloos, and the horrible feasting.

But French ministers to-day have after all something better to do than worry about the feelings of Asiatic emperors. Khai Dinh was

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left for a space to his own devices. Only a message was sent to him that his eldest son should be left in France to learn by practice and education the admirable features of European civilisation. There was a lull, and certain of the gayer and younger members of his suite were seen in the streets of Paris finding out things for themselves.

Sarraut, however, did not stop with the impounding of the Emperor's son. On reflection, he recognised that perhaps the programme had been a trifle severe for an old-fashioned Emperor Poet. Millerand is interesting to a sociologist. Marshal Foch and Poincaré are doubtless fascinating to war diarists. Academicians, the charm of whose conversation is entirely lost in translations, are boring to foreigners. Marseilles business-men are only interested in corn and rice returns, of which Emperors know nothing. Even personalities such as Loucheur, whom the Emperor did not meet owing to the chance of politics, though they may interest a statistician, are not generally amusing. And the luxury of Republican duchesses is a trifle thin to Emperors of Annam.

A new programme was composed, whereby an entirely new field was to be opened to Khai Dinh. He was to be led from the contemplation of Power to that of Riches. Deauville and

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Trouville were to be visited at once, and a list of receptions among the sybarites of modern France was drawn up. Actresses of ancient renown, motor-car manufacturers; the sons of those who liquidated the American stocks; amateur champions of lawn tennis were pressed into the service of educating an Emperor to admire the civilisation of the West, and to forget his fear of Western guns in his love for its splendour. A suite of rooms was taken in the most expensive hotel on the Normandy coast.

Khai Dinh gave his verdict in haste. He took to flight. Ignoring threats and forgetting his fears in the desire to escape, he made his first show of energy recorded in his House for three centuries. He ordered his equerry to take seats in the train and berths in the first boat for home. The Colonial Office was amazed and enraged. But no persuasion could turn Khai Dinh. An official accompanied him on the voyage, and at every stop sent autograph letters and telegrams from the departing Emperor to popular Paris papers explaining his sudden illness, his love for Paris, his desire to see the reparations paid, his admiration for the President and for the Army. In Paris everyone is a sceptic, but they published his letters. But do what they would the fact could not be disguised

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that the Emperor had fled. European civilisation had received a snub.

As in all French stories the point is in the tail. The Marseilles business-men, still wrapt in their Exposition, were overjoyed that the Emperor who had been snatched from them miraculously returned. On his arrival at the station a deputation explained to him that the next boat to Hué, to Annam, would not leave for a week at least, not the smallest boat; and in Marseilles the Emperor had to stay. He heard the news with a sinking heart and took to his room. But Paris thinks Marseilles will have him out, and that there will be at least one more State visit of the Exposition, redounding to the glory of the city and the advantage of the gate-money. Marseilles was founded by the Phœnicians. I went over all this story to a Frenchman of my acquaintance, pointing the stings. He listened with impatient assent. "The charm of French life, after all, the best in the Western world, is found in the anonymous classes," he admitted. "This excursion will not do any good to our colonial policy."

And then as an afterthought (for Frenchmen love the last word), "Do you imagine he would have been better pleased in England with your sport instead of our conversation?"

## *The Mysterious Grenadier*

IN workmen's cafés, and places where they talk, the Great and Undistinguished War has left few legends. Most Generals are already lost in the blurred crowd of themselves; heroes, too numerous and disciplined, have only a local name. But one queer fellow, who was neither, had the fairy glint on him and still wags tongues from Moscow to the Seine. They call him the "Mysterious Grenadier"; his real name is Pierre François Bayens: in his lifetime he has become a folk-tale; and his story, safe from the dust and worm of official histories, will live on by word of mouth, wherever mankind loves mystery rather than virtue in a tale and the taste of an enormous joke at its own expense. First of all, it appears that the story of Bayens is mainly true. The Prefecture of Police of Paris admits it, and it has corroboration at Bucharest and Berlin. He is a swindler by trade, lying under arrest at this hour in Bâle, in Switzerland, for a common fraud done in Paris. Old warrants against him, in 1916 and 1917, held by the police of Berlin, Paris, and Brussels for similar offences, and, it is said, at Moscow, are the clearest documentary evidence for his history. The details hang partly on his own word: and he is not a modest man,



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being rather in the confidence line, and given on other matters to interested boasting. The amazing fact or story remains, believed by respectable authorities and printed in the highly reputable *Temps*, as well as in more credulous papers in five capitals. It is that Bayens fought in almost every army, friend and enemy, during the War; that he is entitled to medals from the Belgian, French, German, Austrian, Rumanian, and Polish armies; that he saw four big offensives, two on each side. In three of his allegiances at least, he showed his command of circumstance by committing a series of frauds on officers and men. He was twice court-martialled by the French, once for theft, once (it may have been unjustly!) for wearing decorations to which he had no claim; and once he served a month, as a soldier, in a Berlin military prison for insulting and riotous behaviour.

He was born of a German mother and Belgian father, near Brussels; he is almost fifty years old. Little is known of him till the year before the War, when, in spite of his age, he enlisted in the Royal Belgian Grenadiers. He is very tall and walks with a limp; this makes his strange adventures still more inexplicable, for his size and build make him easily recognisable. His story is hard to disengage from

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the web of romance which has tangled round it; but it seems established that he shared in the Retreat, deserted at Havre, joined the French Foreign Legion, and from there slipped across the line in a dead German's uniform, stayed a week in the opposite trenches, was sent down to the base, transferred to a Saxon regiment, from which he deserted in turn. He claims to have taken part in Mackensen's drive, leaving him to join the Rumanians, which may be true. Most of the time he appears to have served as a regimental cook, or waiter attached to officers' messes, for most of his frauds were committed in this quality. His two wounds, however, are real. Though stories of his gallantry on both sides at the battle of Verdun may be dismissed, the truth appears to be that he did not disgrace himself, saw a deal of fighting, and for the rest kept quiet in each service, allowing nothing to interfere with his disgraceful trade.

It is enough that here was a unique man. Europe was fenced and entrenched from end to end; for most, no matter how keen their wit and serious their dignity, it was impossible, not only to travel and do what they would, but to evade the obligations of military service for their country. The chains of control on the individual, by papers and docketing and pass-

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ports, were apparently unbreakable. Yet this man freely moved where he wished in the pursuit of his own small and ignominious designs, more carelessly and easily than a swallow above the battle lines. He was not intelligent, though no fool; his size and build marked him out for attention; he was a boaster who made no deep secret of his extraordinary desertions, even before the French court-martial, though that, perhaps, was one of the reasons for his miraculous immunity. His tale was so strange that it was taken for a joke; he was never troubled by the police of any country on other charges than theft. It never seems to have occurred to him or anyone else that his knowledge of short cuts in the impenetrable jungle of war-time Europe would have made him a spy to make the mouth of Foreign Offices water. For, even in France, where *espionage* is an explanation for most phenomena of the War, it was never said that he was ever anything but a swindler. For years (and what years) he was the only free man of Europe, the universal volunteer. Yet he never shirked the firing line wherever he might be, though no man had ever less sentimental reason to risk his skin. He fought readily, if unremarkably, for French and German, Austrian or Rumanian. There is no charge against him of having ever tried to quit

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his grim station under fire. While men were fighting and dying for their illusions or ideals, Bayens was beside them, indifferent to their goal, picking their pockets, unregardful of right or wrong—in their danger and on their leave, sharing the one, and shortening the other by his depredations, never betraying anything but their pockets; utterly impersonal, preoccupied only with his trade.

He defended or attacked, as his fortune fell; marched up and down, sang *Madelon* or *Deutschland über Alles* in rival bivouacs with equal vigour and even accent; he goose-stepped victoriously in Wallachia, or counter-attacked on the Somme, and mocked at German militarism, English perfidy and French tyranny wherever the shadow of a purse enticed him. He was the Fighting Neutral, the last active exponent of the old cause of self-interest forever. The common people of three countries will not let him die, this worthy descendant of Till Eulenspiegel and Puck. The Cobbler of Köpenick may hide his head before a greater artist than himself, for he only mocked an army and a caste, but Bayens, the Mysterious Grenadier, played a practical joke on the world.

## *Nicodemus and a False Prophet*

THE momentary return of Sir Basil Zaharoff and M. Venizelos is anti-climax to a tragedy. The gods sported with these uncommon figures for a while, then tossed them aside to lumber up a dark corner of history. The first is a multi-millionaire, one of the veiled masters of our industrial civilisation, so powerful that the Press never dared speak of him. Merchant princes alone in our days have the privilege of privacy. Public men, like Venizelos, can do nothing without it being blabbed. Their history, often misconstrued; fortunes; affections; tastes, belong to the curious. But powers like Rothschild, Matsui, Theunis, Zaharoff, are usually mysterious, sometimes because their will is respected, partly because their power needs no publicity. Big business has many reasons for hiding its head.

Sir Basil has an additional reason for bashfulness. He is a Phanariot Greek, a foreigner in every country (even Greece), an alien in his own city, Constantinople. If Rockefeller chooses to wall himself from his fellow-countrymen, how much more this universal exile? He is of an old family that lorded it in Byzantium before the Turk. There were many such who stayed under danger, trusting (with a tinge of

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perversity) to their brains to save them when their sword had failed. They prospered, regained fortunes; furnished the Grand Soldan with his diplomats, bankers; they governed his far provinces up to the Danube. Not one of their days was safe, they lived from father to son in the shadow of jealousy and peril. Renouncing all outward show and circumstance, they lived discreetly like mice in a tiger's cage; but once inside the snug walls of the Phanar quarter, they sojourned delicately in the luxury of the old court, which they refined and developed. For centuries they boasted to each other that here under the dangling sword was the last remnant of real civilisation, flourishing, too, and ripening in obscurity. By the 'sixties, the wall of this Christian ghetto had long fallen down, and they were free to go and come as they liked. Some did, and grafted their ancient, exotic stock in Western lands. Basil Zaharoff was one of those that were sent to school in England. His family had fallen into one of the everlasting pitfalls set for the Phanariots; though not poor, his fortune had to be rebuilt. Curious stories are told of his adventures in a Black Sea shipping venture. He next appears, with his strange slim personality, his handsome melancholy and the vague allure of romance, in England again. There he entered the em-

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ploy of a gunmaker. His native polyglottism and his manner got him sent to South America to find contracts. A war was brewing between Peru and Chili; working in both capitals, he succeeded in selling munitions to each side without the other knowing. Similar strokes are at the beginning of most great fortunes; let hypocrites be shocked.

With his huge commission, he bought a place in the firm, and for forty years grew richer. He went over to France, furnished a palace in the Avenue de Bois, with inherited taste and unlimited resources. It is said to contain one of the best art collections in the world—which almost no one has seen. He got himself naturalised a Frenchman, stretched his investments in a vast network. One of them, which has struck most popular imagination, is (perhaps) in the Casino of Monte Carlo, but for so rich a man this must be a small affair. Never interviewed, never spoken of, except where big business was on hand: the ordinary caution of a millionaire doubled with the instinct for concealment of his race. When the war came he was living as few rich know how nowadays, taking the utterest satisfaction from life, enjoying all beauty, a sybarite, a Prince and a philosopher.

He had taken no share in Greek politics.



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Indeed he had hardly been in Athens. This was in the tradition. Greek life to-day is in the hands of the home Greek: narrow, vulgar, pushing, a bad Balkan imitation of the European. There are other Greeks, of the dispersion, Phanariot lordlings, the stern fishermen of the isles, the soft Christian of Hither Asia. Politics in Greece are in the hands, almost all the time, of the homestayer, who hates, despises and abominates the others, and is always ready to unite to oppose them.

There has been one notable exception, Eleutherios Venizelos, the Cretan. There is a contrast between this hard islander, half peasant half farmer, and the romantic prince merchant of the Avenue de Bois. No one of our day has been less understood than Venizelos. To the newspapers he is the "crafty Greek"; the epithet is misleading. His cunning is nothing more formidable than ordinary country shrewdness. He is honest and he has had an ideal. He was a good irregular soldier and bitter fighter. His amazing success in diplomacy was not due to his craft. At the Great Conference there were hundreds of schemers more cunning, perhaps more intelligent than Venizelos. He beat them in fierce competition for the favour of the Big Four, by his open face and mind. It was not so paradoxical as it seems. The Coun-

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cil were, then, bored with the Near East, with the confusions of experts, with the huge tangle that grew thicker and more impenetrable each step they took. Here was a man on whom everyone, opposing experts, even his foes, were agreed, was an upright fellow. The Four were tired of the endless clack of Nationalists with their little maps and their eternally contradicted statistics. Venizelos was not a violent Nationalist, he had a stranger theory. Like many outlying Greeks he thought of himself, first as an orthodox Christian and only afterwards as a Greek. His main interest was not the extension of the Empire, the dream of the Constanides (and that is one reason why Athens always hated him), but the protection of Christian minorities and the preservation of peace. He, like Zaharoff, was on the old model; both mediævals.

They were destined to meet, the Cretan Captain and the luxurious munitioneer. They must have spent many days together pacing to and fro on the soft carpets or in the close perfumed air of the conservatory of the Palace in the Bois, the old epicurean who believed in nothing, not even in war, and the awkward bearded sailor. They fell into friendship, after the period of polished raillery with which Zaharoff met the simplicity of the other; the

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miracle took place, and it was the Phanariot who changed his ideas and not Venizelos. Zaharoff was convinced, he became a disciple, like Nicodemus, and, scornful pacifist, and non-co-operator in human folly, he exchanged dreams of adventure and risk with his fellow-seaman.

In the Zappeion affair, the Athens people had shown a long, pent-up hate for foreigners, especially Venizelos. His exile and return as the Entente governor followed. Zaharoff poured out his gold to equip a Venizelist Army. He who had mocked at war, and made it his dupe, was caught in the wheels of illusion. When the Peace Conference opened, the two were inseparably happy. They saw a new world coming. The news of the Armistice sounded to the millionaire convert like the opening of the heavens; he threw largesse to the Paris poor, literally, in bags, as a seigneur of the old style. The two worked feverishly. Venizelos in the corridors, and Zaharoff by pulling the strings of his immense power. They drew near their goal. A Greece strong enough to keep the peace, a sort of benevolent Empire that would mean the return of safety and justice to the Near East: how mad it all sounds now! They were not noticeably mad in that assembly, however, and often it was Venizelos who tem-

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pered the too easy gifts of territory and influence that the Big Four sought to press on him.

The end came, terribly.

All their mirific Utopia had been built on one assumption—which each of them knew to be false. Yet they pushed the truth out of mind by an act of faith. This Empire of peace and justice stood on the virtue of the Greeks. In a huge revolt of disgust and anger his people showed Venizelos that he was mistaken in them. Before the fire of their dreaming was cold, disillusion utter and irremediable came on the pair of visionaries. For their great plan to have been the least possible, it was necessary that these people should be good and true. Athens, when it found its voice, showed on what base mud they had tried to build. Neither had any idea of the explosion of hatred, of stupidity that the elections showed. They were asleep in a fool's paradise. The Greeks turned them ignominiously out of it.

They took it differently, of course: Zaharoff, with a smile of infinite indulgence for the man who had misled him; after all, the experience was interesting and new, and all the world had fallen into the same pit. Perhaps he loved Venizelos all the more that his own first thoughts had been right. "My golden one,"

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we can hear him saying, "let us have done with childish things." Venizelos took it badly. He had not fallen back into realism like the other, he had tumbled into a strange country. He had to be guided like a child for the future, he knew not what to do, whether to live or die. Since it is necessary for such men to have a theory of life, he may have adopted the earthly philosophy of the Phanariot. I do not know. It looks to-day as if there are stirrings of old instincts in his heart, and that a remembered call has made him take look again towards London and Paris. It is certain that never with his own will will he go back to his people again. Zaharoff himself says, "*Nous autres Français,*" he lives as he lived before, life is still sweet and infinitely interesting to him, because it can never be quite the same. I do not believe that *he* will stir a foot unless it is to contrive a painful end for Constantine—in his elegant unhurrying way. But whether the other allows himself to be hustled back by those who hope even now for something from the virtue even of his bones, after a shadowy reign to fall again definitively, or whether he will drag his golf-clubs round Europe and America, till the end, the Fates of the great days have done with him.

## *The Anarchy of Sister Claudia*

GERMAINE BERTON, the fringed girl anarchist, to whom a Paris jury (in celebrated verdict) gave permission to shoot big, violent Royalists, is a more outlined personality than most foreign comment on her trial and acquittal admits. It took more than a Press-mad criminal to melt a jury of thirteen French small tradesmen to tears in court; more than a half-wit to star in a *cause célèbre* in Paris; much more than a tool of the propaganda of others to convert to the allegiance of the Black Flag a wardress of the prison of St. Lazare—a nun experienced in her work. Germaine Berton, with these three feats, is more than a gun-woman. This nun, Sister Claudia, anarchist for twenty-four hours, is the best side-anecdote of an excessively romantic case. She is twenty-seven, vowed in that pious, blue-overalled order of minor saints, to which all women prisoners in France are trusted: the front trench of good works in the nation. In her photograph, she is indistinguishable from the rest of the apple-cheeked, blanched sisters, lifelong prisoners, whose starched snoods are the only clean things in the old cesspool of St. Lazare. Sister Claudia must have been trustworthy, for she had charge of that important prisoner, the Berton. She

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was utterly sincere, or this adventure could never have snatched her. Nor otherwise would all France be discussing her, nor would she now be making reparation in the Central House of her Order for a great scandal to religion, and another half-comic defeat of idealism in a difficult world.

Sister Claudia adored the unhappy. She lived only to help them, in that famous scullery of misery, the gaol of St. Lazare: worst of all possible hells on earth for women who are still sane. There it is so ancient and foul that visitors must not touch the stair balustrade without rubber gloves. Her duty was much more than to keep cell-doors locked: for weeks she wrestled with the strayed soul of Germaine Berton, patiently advertising the good road, blowing on this brand so well alight with hell-fire. On November 15th, it was over. Sister Claudia was the convert—not the little black sheep. Church, State, and Society changed places in the Sister's dizzy head with wrong-doers; all her beliefs were topsyturvy, and only the compass of her compassion kept steady towards the miseries of the world. Under the back, sharp-eyed mesmerism of the young anarchist, the nun saw, with surprise, that the prayer, sleepless devotion in which she had hitherto exercised herself, were terrible mis-



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takes; and she discovered a hazy, novel paradise of anarchism in the distance, from whose walls unsuspected prophets, and revolvered angels beckoned her imperiously to another road.

"Making an appeal to my generosity, Germaine Berton exalted my charitable sentiments, and at last convinced me that I would be more useful to the poor unhappy ones of the earth by putting off my nun's habit, and becoming a lay woman," is her own pertinent version to the magistrate. A nun and a prostitute; a wardress and a prisoner; a saint and a murderess; these two girls whisper night after night in a black cell on the best way of doing good: and the end is as Tolstoi would have had it. The walls must have helped them to their strange conclusions; the prison noises, these could not stop; reminiscences, dreadful instances that seemed unanswerable in such an air. Emotion, however holy, cannot argue with anarchism at St. Lazare.

The good never mistrust their convictions. Once well convinced, the nun agreed to break her vows, bless the devil, and walked out of the sidegate of the obscene old prison, past the familiar booth of the public writer, down the barrow market of St. Denis, to begin her anarchism. Henceforth Tolstoi will not be so

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well pleased. She goes first to find Vidal, editor of *La Libertaire*, Comrade-Chief of French anarchism. Comrade-Chief is at the printers', Rue Montmartre. There he can hardly hear her for the din of the machine room. But he advises she must write an article, not too long, on her conversion, which he will tack on the end of his latest Daudet attack, though they are going to press. That impossible, he can think of nothing else she can do to help suffering humanity, "for the moment"; best give her a letter for Comrade Le Flaoutter, party bookseller, Boulevard Beaumarchais.

It is a long way East. Sister Claudia hurries. She has been too many years on the wrong road. . . . Comrade Le Flaoutter is certainly a clever man. If anyone can give counsel to a remarkable convert, show the way to the battle-line for a brave recruit, he is the man. He is much more than a propaganda bookseller: member of the Central Executive, police spy (it now appears), and firm ally of Monsieur Lannes of the Sûreté Générale—for whose convenience is rigged up a Judas partition in the back shop. He is above all, the anarchist "post office," where everything necessary for brethren obliged to travel in a hurry—money, revolvers, false passports—is kept ready. Comrade-Chief

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Vidal was wise to send the Sister to Le Flaoutter.

She stands for a moment in front of his window. Its contents are confusingly advanced for a neophyte in the Berton way of salvation. *Nana*, *War and Peace*, Henry George—Bakunin's weighty, fly-spoiled volumes, out-of-date pornography, statistical discourses, malthusianism, lithographs of black-bearded martyrs, Ferrers, Emile Henri, shovelled together in a heap behind the smudged pane—mixed materials for the foundations of an earthly paradise. Sister Claudia, moth-fluttering towards the light, cannot puzzle out this jumble. Inside is Le Flaoutter, confusing as his choice of literature: soiled, but prosperous, a young man with a ragged beard, an outcast, yet more knowing than any other adventurer in Paris: one of the new apostles; not the least. He is used to strange visitors. A month ago it was a boy, you remember, young Philippe Daudet, all eyes and stutter, on his way to parricide; or to filial martyrdom, we shall never know which; in any case, to death, and mystery. Le Flaoutter listens to her low-pitched murmur of pity, work, aspiration: self-sacrifice of which this is the very crown. He hears it all with a smile: but of what sort? Sister Claudia, who cannot so soon lose the manner of the Sisters,

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does not know, for she keeps her eyes to the floor. He answers, anyway, in "an off-hand way." "So you want to quit the Order; join us?" But, like the Comrade-Chief, he can think of nothing definite for her to do. Book hawking—such books—she wants that immediate, burning contact with misery Germaine had persuaded her to; not canvassing and journalism.

"Thereupon he asked me to lunch, at the bar at the corner." That was an interesting meal. Workmen and comrades, pressed against the zinc counter, watched Sister Claudia's spreading, spotless headdress, opposite Le Flaoutter's wagging beard at one of the tables. But even after coffee and a "little glass," he cannot think of anything more direct, any simpler, more emotional way of doing good for her. So he must send her to Comradess Marcelle Weill, Rue des Chartres; Sister Claudia knows her, from the days of the Cottin attack on Clemenceau, when Marcelle was arrested as a militant and sent to St. Lazare. It takes more than four hours to find her: hours of thought and anxious doubt in the glazed tunnels of the Métropolitain Tube, where the nun "unused to Paris" lost herself. Marcelle is pretty, except for her lower teeth; but she is cold, bewildered, unhelpful. She cannot see the Sister's growing despair: for the moment, it is late. Sister can

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have a mattress in a spare room. To-morrow they will try to think it over again.

The mattress made no difference. Nuns are used to hard beds. But Sister Claudia could not sleep. At midnight, there was a noise downstairs. Marcelle's companion, one Gruffy, himself not without fame, comes in singing. Marcelle called to him angrily, warning, and he stops. Sister Claudia hears them arguing till late, perhaps about a plan for her? She lay still, and thought. As soon as it was light, she decided; got up, softly crept downstairs, and walked across Paris to the house of a relative till the Convent sent for her.

So soon ended then, this expedition, more noteworthy than many further afield in the world. She returns to the fold, admonished, cried over, wondered at, to the Central House of the Order. Anarchism lost her more suddenly than Orthodoxy. Not indeed because of its doctrines, which she had no time to compare with her converter's version. Not even because of the personality of its leaders: though Le Flaoutter at least must have unsettled her. Anarchy, in its leaders, had nothing for Sister Claudia to do. Germaine's own short cut to good works, to the relief of miserable humanity, with only a good revolver to help her, even if it were accepted, could not fill the daily

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round of tasks the Sister desired. For the moment, waiting perhaps for the good revolution to come upon us, when Society and the Party are quite ripe, unsensational saints have nothing to use but the humdrum, well-oiled, sentimental machinery of church and state charity. Such an adventure deserved to end in a more romantic discovery.

## *The Centre of England*

THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD:  
worked in extinguished blue bulbs like wingless flies, across the roof of a theatre in Piccadilly Circus, caught my fancy on an empty Sunday morning, when I had London to myself. I stood at leisure in the traffic refuge, under the coal-black Cupid that shoots the westward 'buses; and took my bearings by angles: like an explorer at the Pole, anxious to find the right inches square for his flag-stick, his bottle of records, and heap of stones. This Centre, not of geography, but of humanity, is after all as remote and strange as the World's End. There might well be some remarkable prize, a souvenir, or a secret to be found at its exact emplacement. I followed, with lazy trigonometry, traces from the initial and the final letter of the boasting phrase, downward until they cut precisely, between two mock Greek pilasters, in a tangle of iron confectionery: then I bisected this base angle by a perpendicular, that fell over a stucco cornice, and led my eye to an old sullen fellow, with a rack of Sunday newspapers set up in the deserted portal to the Stalls. I fumbled a moment to choose which of his wares covered this exact Centre of the English World. There was a pink tipsters' prophecy, in blunt



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type, spattered with exclamation marks, that overlapped it with a corner: but I settled on a sober newspaper, triple folded, as trophy of that unique spot. "Give me that," I said. . . . "*Marriage News*, sir, certainly."

It was stranger than I hoped. In it were set out descriptions and demands of those maddest to marry in England to-day. Authentic news of the million superfluous women of whom the world has heard. By rule of the agency that published it, each advertisement was curt: giving height, age and revenue on a model supplied: no more emotional than a casualty list. At first this disappointed me, this summary of paragraphs as dry to the imagination as a war communiqué from a Central Asian Front. I began, however, to make amusing sums: found that widows ask for richer husbands than those who have had none; that only oldish women ask for good looks in men; that Twenty-one wants a thousand a year, and a sportsman, but Twenty-eight rarely wants more than a "business man, with five pounds a week." Many claimed that they were "considered pretty": none thought it mattered so much as a fat bank-book. There was a column of Bachelors: uninteresting, ashamed gentlemen, six feet high. Every entry was genuine in laconic brevity. Yet vaguely (I fancied) round one or two of these

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Bachelors hovered a dubious air, a glint of teeth, in their omission of age limits to pretenders to their hand. Landru hunted in such woods. But the prime keeper of these thickets moved solidly amongst them—real, respectable, almost visible in the style of his pretensions: his “duty to the public,” his “thirty years of gratifying experience,” his unrivalled knowledge of the Social World. I could almost hear the sound of his voice leap out of the typed warning on the last page: “Everyone advertising in this paper has signed a contract which I hold.” Round his large print islands in the text, a sea of clamouring, pleading, unwedded women, whose cries pricked through the prim notices, in a chorus that drove all pleasant thoughts from my head, as I zigzagged across the columns.

They were marshalled there, under his firm hand, constrained to be nameless and discreet: but under their anonymities, like hoods at a carnival, their shameless pleading pierced through. Give us our share in Life; Hell or Heaven matters not, they cried behind their five-line grids. And one by one they held up their poor baits, the spinsters of Thirty-five. I have forty pounds a year in the Funds, calls one. Another: I am 5-ft. 4-in. I have a house full of furniture. Another: I know French. So

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one after another, as the eye scans the columns, they cry out, and stretch out their hands.

They have abandoned old snares to try cold print: furs and ribbons and lace; shawls and combs; shoes and soft gloves and perfumes, the bewilderment of the senses and the mysteries of sex, to make a last appeal to man's hard reason. They display the treasures they have been told he cannot resist: money, solid quantities: lustreless commodities for his greed. Among them wander stray girls, of eighteen, nineteen, drawn into this damned chorus, by an anxiety, a presentiment, and not able—yet—to understand, they beckon innocently for the man they dreamed of in the schoolroom, "dark, pale, tall, with a thousand pounds a year, and affectionate." He has been long coming, they are tired and a little peevish at his delay. Wedging these around, the others, terribly awake, batter, scream, implore:

"I am thirty-eight, good social rank, would marry clerk or refined workman."

"I am what they call a sporting girl, play football."

All their enticements are the record of their mistakes, their misunderstandings of life and men.

"And I, have bobbed hair, but could love a home."

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"I am a good Churchwoman, earning ten pounds a week," persuades another. Alas, in heaven there is no marriage, and you are forty-three, poor sister. Wait till you are fifty. Your despair that now even bald words cannot cloak, will change and dote like this:

"Fifty-one, spinster, travelled and musical, seeks handsome man, of breeding, Army officer preferred."

So it continues, page after page, through the whole gamut of misery, choirs of crazy Maenads, loud and shrill, angry, moistered, anguished, till I am afraid to read. This is the limbo of the unwanted, of all those outside of the universal law that nothing is made in vain: whom man had robbed of even tragedy, or any part in bearable human lot. One million of them cheated by man's stupid civilisation, his idiot sentimentality, education, wars. I have stumbled over the vent pipe of their agony, in the Centre of the World. The smoke of their torment is thin and rank. I could not bend over it long.

## *The Dance of the Young Old Maids*

THERE is always a reason, often a sad one, behind popular festivals, however boisterous and merry their outward show. When the inner kernel shrivels, the holiday droops: no folklore society can restore it. So Guy Fawkes's day is quiet since Emancipation; and Lord Mayors' processions are not the same as when London fought kings. Songs and horseplay are the only way a crowd can express itself for a whole day: even wakes are done with music. For no one can weep in company for long, nor laugh alone. The rarest feasts of all, those exclusively for women, have always a bitter simplicity in their hearts. Beware when the savage women steal out together to mourn Tammuz. So with the more demure revels of Saint Catherine, kept up, according to custom, last Saturday in Paris by all sempstresses, mantau makers, and milliners.

The Paris women know (elegant arsenal of fashion) is held up by the lively fingers of the best needlewomen in the world. Their day has its importance. Badly paid and organised, they are hard done by the rest of the year, by the hardest-headed and hearted organisation in Europe, the great Dressmakers' Syndicate. But once a year they revolt to feast the mystery

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of their Saint Catherine. With that adaptability to what-must-be, which the first Worth brought over the Channel as his only capital, the great houses yield, set out champagne in the ateliers, send out for sweet cakes and violins, and let the girls dance. More, by a knowing generosity, in old Worth's manner if not by his invention, they give them stuff remnants to make fancy dress for themselves, which they do with cut and style no millionairess could buy with money. These artist-work-girls show themselves in the upper windows in their creations: snaring the attention of rich passers on their way to the Ritz, in the Place Vendôme; making advertisement for the good of the house. Paquin, Worth, and Doucet are shut. Puzzled customers see every window up to the roofs blossomed out in delicious masquerade: hear laughter and tunes creeping out of unsuspected basements under their feet, and brush against bunches of shining girls in costumes of every fancy, tripping inquisitively the reserved pavements of the Rue de la Paix. It is Carnival; every street round the dressmakers' quarter of the Opera is taken up by it.

It starts in the morning. Everyone comes late, for once. The early comers joke and nudge, peeping at the good things set out in the sewing-machine rooms, putting on their



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fancy costumes, if they have them, and admiring the others. By and by, the first hands arrive with cardboard boxes holding the "Catherine caps" they have made; the central symbol of the fête. In the big houses this year, these are made of lace, like delicate nightcaps; and every where trimmed with ribbons of two colours, green for jealousy and yellow for scorn. When all are come together, these are given to the girls who have the right and duty to wear them. Saint Catherine's wheel of spikes and her theology are lost, but not her cap and not her virgin martyrdom. All know whose turn has come; the workroom keeps no secrets, and when one hangs back or turns reluctant the others kiss her kindly and force her to put it on. Every Cath-er-inette has received by first post a Valentine card with midget mob-cap and the pretty, dole-ful ribbons stock on. Mock protests, giggles and scuffles in the corner while the wine is served to all.

This is the consecration of old maids with the Catherine Cap. Who reaches twenty-five years without being married or asked is obliged to wear the cap by imprescriptible tradition of the workroom. It is a universal custom to mock at old maids. These follow it, and laugh, in company, at themselves. But younger minxes, to encourage sisters and friends, or



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because the cap is charming, bring out illegal "Catherines" of their own, and don them. The thing is done; Carnival is launched.

Already the adventurous are leaning at the street windows, waving excitedly to the neighbours; the new Catherinettes are pushed forward: where there is a balcony and the girls have made fancy dress, the pierrots, harlequins, dandies, and macaronis (and the little jockeys), show themselves to the crowd. The violins encourage them, and the wine. Some of them tumble downstairs, and link up in the street below, the capped ones in the centre, keeping tight hold of each other's thin arms, they totter and run a little way on their high heels. Some pretend to knock off men's hats, if these are alone and do not look rough. All at once you see them stop, here and there, to start eager conversations on dress and ages with their friends, steadying themselves against the rushes of the groups behind, as if they had suddenly forgotten that the moment before they had been screaming and absorbed in the fun.

Some turn off to the Boulevards, though never far from their own quarter, for they are not very brave. Most go on to their Ball, to stand about till opening time. This year it was in the Continental rooms, used the rest of the year for fashionable burgher weddings

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and other affairs. There are thick carpets on the stairs: on every marble landing a ton of ornamental brass worked up in a lamp-stand. It is very rich. The Rooms are massively gilded in arches and vaulted ceiling, like a golden prison for Incas; with great candelabra, each a hundred-weight of broken glass, hanging over the floor. At one end across trestles is a buffet, where waiters subtly relaxed from their daily dignity, stand ready to sell iced lemonade, biscuits, and common, white wine. At one o'clock, while the citizens are still lunching, the swarm chatters in. The *Up Side Down Band* (from Chicago) starts a lament for Dixie; the girls catch each other round the waists and pass along the floor. The trombone and the violins are more exciting than wine.

Now the austere meaning of the festival is revealed. What was before only a discreet workshop revel, mixed with cunning advertisement, clung to by the girls as their last liberty, is changed nowadays into a fiercer and livelier celebration of what war has done to women. It is a more universal celebration than the lifeless officialities of Armistice Day under the Arc de Triomphe. Even the factories of the outer suburbs have joined in, unasked. It is louder—not rough, but different from the demure promenade of former years,

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more audacious and real. For never before have poor Catherinettes been so numerous, nor so unfortunate. As a sign of the change, the Cap itself, which was a grotesque thing like a valentine, not often a pleasant gift, has been turned by feminine instinct (now that all will have to wear it), into a gracious morsel of soft lace and most careful fashion. There are few men left, the war has taken them almost all: all worth having. The floor is crowded with women, dancing together. Before the war men pressed to the Catherine dance; now there are only a score of sulky boys of the spoilt generation, and a dozen older men, already husbands and fathers of a few among these very girls. There is not one marriageable man in the room. The war has done that. These thousands of Catheriners, if not beautiful, have the fragile and childlike charm of the Parisian woman, their clothes made by themselves are marvels of taste and needlework, though, except for the masquerade dresses of the great houses, of poor stuff; no princess could look more desirable, for they have made them themselves (though of butter muslin), and Paris fashions are made for no other figures than those of these frustrate, thrifty little virgins. Never have there been so many pretty girls unmarried in Paris. These girls are

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honest creatures, the aristocracy of French workwomen. They have been robbed of the only ambition which their simplicity desired. The generation that died on the frontier were the husbands of whom they have been cheated. Haughty mannequins, near an airy flight to other destinies forbidden to the rest by opportunity and prejudice, look down from their height (for the minutes they have agreed to stay) on these girls who envy their inches and their luck; even the mannequins pity them a little. The humble dance is something grander than it seems, and the festival of these girls whom Death has cheated for ever of all they could want, and left them nothing but the prospect of sterile and laborious days to old age, for all their poor perfumes and the slender arts of coquetry to which they cling, is more tragic and austere than any holy selfishness of nuns. They do not feel this now; and for hours they wave up and down in dance in the frail arms of their sisters, to enjoy to the uttermost the bitter holiday of Saint Catherine.

## *Bernhardt's Last Scene*

THE air was steady and bright, the day they buried Sarah Bernhardt. The crowd heard the wheel-creakings as she passed, and smelled the loads of costly roses like heavy incense in their faces. Even those at the back, who could see nothing, had this satisfaction: they grumbled less than is usual at so great a show. From the pavement we saw people in the window balconies, and on the roofs. Something of our emotion must have reached them, for they nudged each other, and seemed to smile.

Sarah Bernhardt was always her own stage manager. She planned to make her last appearance on the mortal stage, the best of all her parts. All her life she meditated it. Once in a dream, she saw herself buried abroad, far from Paris; this would have ruined all. Ever afterwards she carried with her on all her travels, a rosewood coffin, lined with white satin; packed in an unwieldy case. She was sure at least of this. Like the simplest woman of her city, she trusted no foreigners in such essential matters.

Everyone sees death differently; some as a black ghost; some as a hope; or a bankruptcy, or a dreamless relief. Sarah thought of it as

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a supreme tragedy to be played in triumph. That is as good a way as another. She was an actress in the inward places of her heart. Though she had worked for seventy years, and had tasted all joys, and known all possible sorrows, she forgot her fatigue when she thought of the stage set for her final performance. Now everything had been set out as she had directed: the huge, battered case, that had lumbered behind her on all her travels, was waiting in the hall for its final journey, next to the mound of trunks that never would serve her any more. The priest was beside her bed, the moment was near. Before she let herself sink, she went over methodically, meticulously, the setting she had made for her great Exit. Service in the dark, little church of Saint François de Sales, that tiny hiding place for peace in the worldly Plaine Monceau. The long route allegorical of her life, down the stately Boulevard Malesherbes, through the mid-day crowd of the rich Rue Royale, across the glorious Place de la Concorde; through the long Rue de Rivoli, from the Palaces at one end, to the narrow streets where working housewives would be doing their morning shopping; a moment's pause beside her own theatre; then slowly on, to the City of the Dead, Père

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Lachaise, there to lie for ever in the past, beside Rachel and her elders.

She could hear from not far below in the street, the reporters, her last critics, discussing the decision of the Hotel de Ville to bury her in state. And work-girls, on their way to the factory asking how she did. The last House was full; waiting impatiently for her. At noon she felt this, and said, half-impatiently, as if it were an actor who was late, *Comme mon agonie est longue*. How unpunctual is Death. Nothing remained now to do but to play that supreme rôle for which she had so well prepared. It would not be tiring. Some light through the shutter slats, of a spring sun, comforted her. By an unexpected chance, the season would help her out. And with her last breath she said, *Je veux des fleurs, beaucoup de fleurs*. The last touch; more flowers than she had ever had for a gala night.

Three blows of a sexton's staff on the stone pavement of the aisle; signal in France for the raising of the curtain; given as she had appointed as her coffin came through the door.

All the first-night crowd were there; all that had a name in fashion, riches, art; following her funeral procession, co-actors in her greatest production. There were the flowers she had asked: more than she had dreamed of. They



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filled the place before the porch; waist high; weighed down seven coaches. All the details of her strange fancy had been carried out. It was a stage play; a playing to the gallery. Small critics may mistake her, and regret; or stupidly blame. Her death was a pageant she had planned; for she was an actress, not merely in her trade, but in her soul. Her art was not separate from her; nor to be put off at the end. Her whole life, loves, miseries, was a well-constructed play, a romantic legend of the sort she most admired. The Paris streets were her last gallery; crushed on a five-mile route to see Sarah play her fifth act.

Her life and death was as single purposed as a saint; and with the same ruling purpose; to give all to her fellows. Flattery and the rewards of her profession, she felt no more than a billionaire thinks of new gains on the curb: and money was no more in her thoughts than is the need for his daily bread to a monk. What she had, she gave freely, the last morsel; to her family, to a countless crowd of parasites she pitied and protected; to her companions, to the public. She wished they might have pleasure in her going.

But in this last part, played before a vaster gallery than ever she had in life, she had to ask our indulgence. The enchantments of her voice

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were mute for ever; her graces and gestures were taken from her. And in spite of the roses that banked over and covered it, as she the greatest actress of our times passed, in a narrow black coffin drawn by black, silver-spangled horses, the stage illusion was at last stripped from her, and we knew that we were looking at the funeral of a poor, old woman, going to the rest she had well deserved. It was not the curtain she had planned; it was a greater one; and Sarah's last scene touched emotions that never she had in the days of her fresh glories.

*April 3rd, 1923.*

THE END

















$$\begin{array}{r} 1950 \\ 1937 \\ \hline 13 \end{array}$$

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